

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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June 11, 2024
Start: 10:30 a.m.
Recess: 11:56 a.m.

HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - COMMITTEE ROOM, 14TH
FLOOR

B E F O R E: Keith Powers, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
Crystal Hudson
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
Pierina Ana Sanchez

A P P E A R A N C E S

Michael McSweeney, nominee for reappointment as the City Clerk and Clerk of the Council

Raju Mann, nominee to serve as a member of the City Planning Commission

Helen Skipper, nominee to serve as a member of the New York City Board of Corrections

Tricia M. Taitt, nominee to serve as a Director of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation

Dr. Vincent Calamia, nominee to serve as a Director of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Test one, two, one,
3 two. Today's date is June 11, 2024. Rules, Privileges
4 and Elections on the 14th Floor, being recorded by
5 Keith Polite.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning and
7 welcome to the New York City Committee on Rules,
8 Privileges and Elections.

9 At this time, please place all phones on
10 vibrate or silent mode.

11 If you want to submit testimony, send it
12 to testimony@Council.nyc.gov. Once again, that's
13 testimony@Council.nyc.gov.

14 At any time during this hearing, do not
15 approach the dais.

16 Thank you for your cooperation.

17 Chair Powers, we are ready to begin.

18 CHAIR POWERS: [GAVEL] Good morning, and
19 welcome to the meeting of the Committee on Rules,
20 Privileges and Elections. I'm City Council Member
21 Keith Powers, Chair of this Committee.

22 Before we begin, I'd like to introduce
23 the other Members of the Committee who are present.
24 Crystal Hudson is in the house. We are also joined, I
25 believe, by Council Member Salamanca, and I believe

2 we'll be joined by Council Member Brooks-Powers as
3 well, virtually. I'll acknowledge other Members as
4 they appear. I'd also like to acknowledge Francis
5 Galvez, who is filling in today as acting Counsel for
6 Committee Counsel Jeff Campagna, who I also want to
7 recognize, and I also want to recognize the Committee
8 Staff who worked on the appointments that we'll be
9 hearing today, Chief Ethics Counsel Pearl Moore,
10 Director of Investigations Francesca Dellavecchia,
11 Deputy Director of Investigations Alicia Vassell.

12 Today, we'll be hearing a public hearing
13 on five nominations for appointment. We'll be
14 considering the reappointment of a man who needs no
15 introduction, Michael McSweeney, as a City Clerk and
16 Clerk of the Council; the Manhattan Borough
17 President's request for the Council's advice and
18 consent in connection with the nomination of a person
19 also familiar to this body, Raju Mann, for membership
20 on the City Planning Commission; the nomination of
21 Helen Skipper to serve as a member of the New York
22 City Board of Corrections; the proposed designation
23 of Tricia Tate for appointment by the Mayor as
24 Director of New York City Health and Hospitals
25 Corporation, and the proposed designation of Dr.

2 Vincent Calamia for reappointment by the Mayor as
3 Director of the New York City Health and Hospitals
4 Corporation. Welcome and congratulations to all on
5 your nominations.

6 We will begin today's hearing with
7 Resolution 457, related to the nomination of Michael
8 McSweeney for reappointment as New York City Clerk
9 and Clerk of the Council.

10 Before I introduce the candidate, I will
11 review the functions and qualifications of the Clerk.
12 The duties of the City Clerk and the Clerk of the
13 Council are set forth in Section 48 of the City
14 Charter. Under Section 48, the Council is mandated to
15 appoint a Clerk who shall serve a term of six years.
16 The City Clerk may be removed on charges by a two-
17 third vote of the City Council. Such decision is
18 subject to judicial view. As Clerk to the City
19 Council, the Clerk attests to all laws passed by the
20 Council and all legislation passed by the Council
21 that requires concurrent action by the State
22 legislature. The Clerk of Council is also responsible
23 for keeping the transcripts of Council proceedings.
24 It's a duty of City Clerk to attest to leases and
25 deeds of City properties, grant agreements, bonds,

2 tax notes, and additional obligations of the City.

3 The City Clerk must keep and is in charge of all the
4 papers and documents of the City, including executive
5 and administrative orders of Mayor, certificates of
6 judicial appointments by the Mayor, oaths of office
7 for City employees, and referendum petitions. The
8 Council Clerk serves a term of six years and until
9 such time a successor is chosen. I also feel like we
10 left out a really important one on here, which is
11 also responsible for marrying folks in the City of
12 New York, which I feel like is where many people come
13 to find out where our City Clerk's office is.

14 Michael McSweeny is a very familiar face
15 to all of us having served as City Clerk and Clerk of
16 the Council since 2009. If approved, he will be
17 appointed to serve a six-year term expiring on May
18 12, 2030. I want to welcome him up to the dais here
19 today, please, and then when he's there we'll swear
20 him in.

21 Welcome. Nice to see you. Please raise
22 your right hand to be sworn in.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GALVEZ: Do you affirm
24 that you will tell the truth, the whole truth, and
25 nothing but the truth in the testimony that you

2 provide to this Committee and in answer to all
3 Council Member questions?

4 MICHAEL MCSWEENY: Yes.

5 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you, Mr. McSweeny. I
6 now recognize you to make an opening statement.

7 MICHAEL MCSWEENY: Thank you very much.
8 Chairperson Powers, Members of the Committee, thank
9 you for the opportunity to appear today as a
10 candidate for reappointment to the position of City
11 Clerk. Do you want me to start again? Okay, thank
12 you.

13 Chairperson Powers, Members of the
14 Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear
15 today as a candidate for reappointment to the
16 position of City Clerk and Clerk of the Council.
17 Serving in this role has been the highlight of my
18 career, and I am very passionate about the work that
19 I do. As the Clerk of the Council, I have the
20 privilege of working with you at every Stated
21 Meeting. I call the roll and officially announce that
22 a quorum of the Council is present. After each stated
23 meeting is ended, I sign and certify each of the
24 introductions and resolutions that were passed. After
25 each election, as you know, I also have the honor of

2 swearing in you and the other Members of the Council,
3 as well as other officials elected during each
4 municipal election, and I preside over the election
5 of the Speaker under Council rules. As the City
6 Clerk, I administer the New York City Marriage Bureau
7 and the New York City Lobbying Bureau. As a lawyer
8 with an interest in constitutional law and background
9 in government and higher education, my work in the
10 City Clerk's office has put me on the forefront of
11 two of the most important constitutional issues of
12 our time, marriage equality and regulation of
13 lobbying. I believe that my stewardship of the office
14 since the first day of marriage equality in New York
15 City has contributed to the substantial increase in
16 the number of couples that travel to New York City to
17 get married. I have played a key role in the
18 implementation of lobbying reform legislation in 2006
19 and 2013 that has resulted in a lobbying enforcement
20 system that is robust, fair, and beyond reproach.
21 Having the opportunity to serve as City Clerk for
22 another term would enable me to continue to implement
23 these reforms and secure the long-term success of
24 this office. The historic first day of marriage
25 equality in New York City on Sunday, July 24, 2011,

2 will always be one of the most proudest and happiest
3 achievements of mine. On that day, I officiated the
4 first same-sex wedding in New York City, which was
5 broadcast live on CNN. Happy couples walked out of
6 the Marriage Bureau in front of the media from all
7 over the world, proudly and joyfully holding their
8 marriage certificates for all the world to see. This
9 was a day that showed off our city as a beacon of
10 tolerance and hope to people around the world like no
11 other. This happy event was followed by the yearly
12 increase in couples marrying here until we surpassed
13 Las Vegas in the number of marriage licenses issued
14 in 2016. We made history again in 2020 when the
15 pandemic struck. Working with DoITT, we created the
16 world's first virtual marriage license appointment
17 application, Project Cupid. Project Cupid ensured
18 that couples could receive marriage licenses remotely
19 on a large scale without leaving the safety of their
20 homes. Project Cupid has become a critical tool to
21 enable the office to virtually provide marriage
22 licenses to couples where one of the parties is in a
23 hospital, prison, or otherwise homebound, which we
24 hope will survive the next budget with your help and
25 support.

2 To conclude, it is truly an honor and a
3 privilege to be here before you today to be
4 considered for another term as City Clerk. Thank you
5 very much for this opportunity, and I look forward to
6 discussing my qualifications and answering your
7 questions.

8 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you. We've also been
9 joined by Council Member Sanchez.

10 Congratulations on your reappointment,
11 and I want to thank you for your assistance during
12 COVID on a number of constituent issues, including
13 those seeking to get married even during a very
14 challenging moment to be, wedding cancellations and
15 things like that so deeply appreciate your office's
16 assistance during that time. You've been now, this is
17 your third term, you oversee a lot of functions. I
18 also should have mentioned the Lobbying Bureau as
19 well as being one of them. Can you just talk about
20 some of the challenges? I think that your office is,
21 we all know you personally, of course, presiding here
22 in the Council on our Stated Meetings and also many
23 New Yorkers know you from the various interactions,
24 including getting a wedding certificate, but can you
25 talk about some of the challenges your office has

2 when it comes to whether it's funding and resources
3 or administrating overall, you have so many
4 responsibilities, challenges that your office might
5 face at this present moment when it comes to doing
6 all those functions and with the resources or just
7 the ability to do those functions?

8 MICHAEL MCSWEENY: Sure. And thank you
9 again for this opportunity.

10 Chairperson Powers, I would say that
11 right now our biggest challenge, like most City
12 agencies or all City agencies, are the PEGs that we
13 had in the last year due to the budget issues, which
14 I know you're all familiar with. We had substantial
15 cuts in last year's budget and cuts in our outyears
16 as well so our shortfall for Fiscal Year '25 is over
17 400,000 dollars, and that's the entire budget. In
18 addition, our headcount was reduced from 60 to 55,
19 and we're still over our headcount at the present
20 because we had, I think, three people return from
21 maternity and paternity leave since the headcount was
22 reduced so we still have to bring those people back
23 so we're still over the headcount. I mean, that's
24 really the biggest issue, but, you know, one thing as
25 a small City agency, I've known since, you know, I

2 started working there that, you know, we are expected
3 to do more with less, and we always, you know, make
4 every effort to do that, and I think we've always
5 adhered to that as one of our mottos, if you will,
6 but it definitely makes things more difficult. You
7 know, right now, we can't bring on any college aides
8 to help us with the office so it makes it more
9 difficult for us to meet the number of appointments
10 that we have for people getting marriage licenses. I
11 mean, I think it's counterproductive. If I had the
12 chance to speak before OMB, I would say that I think
13 on the revenue side, these cuts are definitely
14 counterproductive because, number one, you know,
15 we've had to reduce the number of appointments that
16 we have on Friday, which is always the busiest day of
17 the week, because on Friday, every single couple
18 shows up for their appointment. Now, the appointments
19 we put on the calendar since the pandemic are not
20 always kept. They're free of charge. You can, you
21 know, anyone can take one of the appointments on our
22 Project Cupid website, but Fridays are the day that
23 everybody shows up. Tuesdays and Wednesdays, not so
24 much. I mean, that really prevents us from providing
25 the maximum amount of service that we have in terms

2 of marriage licenses, marriage ceremonies, and happy
3 couples, and one way in which that's a big issue, I
4 mean, I know this is, you know, kind of outdated, but
5 in 2013, NYCGO did an analysis of the impact of
6 marriage equality on New York City's economy so they
7 looked at the number of people that have traveled to
8 New York in the first year that marriage equality
9 happened, and they did an analysis of the number of
10 hotel rooms, the number of restaurants, museum
11 visits, you know, all the things that happen when
12 people come to New York City, and they found that
13 there was a 70-million-dollar direct revenue impact
14 on the city, and I think it was 156 million in
15 ancillary revenue, the money that goes to everybody
16 that, to all the ancillary businesses, the cabs, the
17 restaurants, you know, all the things that people in
18 New York City do while they're visiting so that's
19 just one area.

20 On the lobbying side, we have a very
21 small group of dedicated people doing the work that,
22 in New York State, we have five people working full-
23 time in the lobbying bureau, and compared, we have
24 more than half of the number of people that the state
25 lobbying issue, COELIGA, I think, is what it's now

2 referred to, has, and I think they have over 20
3 people just focused on lobbying so we're doing, like
4 the lion... you know, that kind of work with five
5 people so we know how to juggle work, and I'm very
6 fortunate to have a dedicated, smart, excellent team,
7 but we get everything done because we've kind of
8 learned how to do things on a calendar basis so we do
9 enforcement in the beginning of the year. We just got
10 through our first round of appearances at OATH. All
11 of the adjudication of lobbying issues are done at
12 Oath, and then we do training in the second half of
13 the year, and then we do audits throughout the year.
14 So right now, we need more people in the lobbying
15 bureau. If somebody were to be out sick, or if
16 somebody were to leave, we would be in a big jam. One
17 of the things that I spoke before the Committee on
18 Government Operations recently, and just on lobbying
19 activities, and one of the things we have not been
20 able to do is hire a full-time trainer. Now, the
21 full-time trainer was funded as part of Local Law 129
22 of 2013, and I have my two attorneys, my Deputy City
23 Clerk and my Assistant Counsel focusing on doing all
24 the training of all the lobbyists. We've been doing
25 it virtually. We used to have them come to the

2 office, and we were able to do multiple training
3 sessions. We've been doing it virtually in recent
4 years, and we really could do more if we had a full-
5 time trainer, and those other people could focus more
6 on investigations, on doing more things that we don't
7 have the time to invest because we're just barely
8 getting by, or can I say, we're just treading water,
9 as it were. I'd say those are the biggest challenges
10 in front of us right now.

11 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you. Also, we're
12 joined by Council Member Brooks-Powers virtually as
13 well.

14 Just one last question for me. You
15 oversee the Lobbying Bureau. Often, a topic we
16 discuss around exactly, and there's bills in the City
17 Council right now related to provisions around
18 lobbying, extending lobbying bans, things like that.
19 Can you just talk from your experience about how you
20 think the current lobbying laws, regulations, and
21 things that you're doing too, training, how they are
22 working in order to keep a lobbying world industry,
23 how to keep them compliant, how to create the
24 necessary distance and separation between government
25 and lobbying, especially when folks are outgoing.

2 Just talk a little bit about what your Bureau is
3 overseeing, and how you think the current regulations
4 and laws are working.

5 MICHAEL MCSWEENY: I think the current
6 regulations are working pretty well. I think that New
7 York City has a robust regulatory scheme. I know that
8 because other cities, when they are talking about or
9 deciding to enact lobbying regulation, they call us,
10 and they look at what the City Council did, and like
11 we've been a model for some of those other cities,
12 and I think that the vast majority of lobbyists want
13 to comply, and they want to be out there, like the
14 more business that they're doing, the more business
15 they will attract so I think that most lobbyists are
16 reporting, maybe some are over-reporting, but it's
17 certainly, I would say, the vast majority of
18 lobbyists have been reporting pretty successfully. I
19 think some lobbyists have better compliance
20 departments than others. That's always an issue, but
21 we make it clear to the lobbyists that the most
22 important thing that you need to know is that the
23 public has a right to know who is lobbying their
24 government and how much they're being paid to do so,
25 so that is why it's so important that you are on time

2 with your lobbying reports. We keep an eye on our
3 lobbyists. We know who's registered. If somebody
4 hasn't been complying, we will make phone calls. We
5 will say, hey, you know, like we noticed that you
6 haven't been doing that and, through that process and
7 through the training process, and we remind people
8 what the lobbying deadlines are. We remind people
9 that it's always better to register than to not
10 register, and we try to take the kind of approach
11 that the Conflict of Interest Board takes with City
12 employees. We try to let people know, if you have any
13 questions, ask us. We would much rather you ask us
14 and get it right rather than we find out after the
15 fact and there has to be the possibility of fines and
16 maybe worse.

17 The teeth that the lobbying law has that
18 we use to make sure that the lobbying law is enforced
19 are the late fees. The late fee for each lobbyist is
20 25 dollars per day per client and, for new first-time
21 lobbyist filers, it's 10 dollars per day per client
22 so if you do not report one of your clients or like
23 you forget to report or you're not reporting, the
24 late fees can be substantial. In the last 12 months,
25 we had a seemingly large increase in the number of

2 late fees, and we know that it's not for lack of
3 effort. Even lobbyists that attend training and that
4 know what their responsibilities are are still
5 compiling pretty substantial late fees so that's
6 something that we're always looking to do. We don't
7 want to unnecessarily have people paying substantial
8 late fees, but that's the way we kind of keep the
9 community focused on doing their compliance and doing
10 so in a timely fashion. One of the great improvements
11 of the office has been the Lobbyist Reporting
12 Database. The Lobbying Reporting Database shows who
13 the lobbyists are, how much they're reporting. It
14 allows you to upload your retainer so we know the
15 retainer contract between the lobbyists and the
16 clients. You can upload other information as needed,
17 and it's very effective in terms of being a resource
18 for people to know who is lobbying the government and
19 how much they're getting paid to do so, so that has
20 been a very handy tool in our enforcement, and we're
21 happy about that so lobbyists know that this
22 information is out there for the public, and we think
23 that that's the best incentive for people to do their
24 filing.

2 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you. We're going to
3 now go to Member questions, and we have a question
4 from Council Member Sanchez.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you, Mr.
6 Chair, and good morning. Good to see you.

7 Well, first, of course, we know you. I
8 know you very, I feel like in a very personal way
9 because of all the tears that flowed when I was
10 swearing in with my family that first day so thank
11 you for what you have done for our city and the many
12 aspects that you have.

13 My question is about the office. You
14 mentioned that you have a current head count of 55,
15 but there are 60 people who are working in the
16 office. Can you just tell us about what are those
17 roles and responsibilities and a little bit about the
18 diversity and how those staff that work in the
19 Clerk's office represent the City of New York?

20 MICHAEL MCSWEENY: Sure. It's actually 59.
21 We had one person went to another City agency last
22 week so we can't even think about hiring anyone new
23 until we get down below that headcount. I would say
24 most of the office works in the Marriage Bureau. We
25 have an office in each of the five boroughs that

2 focuses on providing marriage licenses, marriage
3 ceremonies. In Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, we
4 have six people working full time; Staten Island, we
5 have two people working full time; and the rest of
6 the staff work in Manhattan. Every year, we have our
7 mandatory audit with the EEOC, and we are on very
8 good terms with the EEOC. We've received good marks
9 in terms of our diversity. I would say I think there
10 are more female members of the staff than male
11 members of the staff. We definitely are diverse and I
12 think the percentage of ethnicities matches the
13 percentage of ethnicities of the city so I think
14 we're kind of a good reflection of that, and one
15 thing that's interesting, I've never had a chance to
16 mention it so I'll mention it now. I'd say maybe in
17 2012 and 2013, somebody in the press did an analysis
18 of the management of each City office by virtue of
19 percentage of I think white people versus non-white
20 people, and it started from the big agencies and we
21 were at the bottom of the list which meant that in
22 terms of our management staff, we had the most
23 diverse management of any City government because we
24 were on the bottom. The agencies on top were the
25 agencies that were the least diverse so I would say

2 that probably still holds up because the same
3 managers are still in the office and it's the same
4 level. I think we have added another person who's a
5 person of color so I think in terms of our diversity,
6 I think it's very good. I think the EEOC would bear
7 that out in terms of our audits. I believe we're up
8 to date with all of our compliance in that regard.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Great, thank you.
10 Thank you so much. Wyou said six in Brooklyn and the
11 Bronx, etc., you meant each, in each borough?

12 MICHAEL MCSWEENY: In each borough, there
13 are six full-time people assigned.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Got it, okay.
15 Great. Thank you so much.

16 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you. Do we have any
17 other questions?

18 Congratulations again on your
19 renomination. Thanks for everything you do.

20 Hearing no other questions, we'll move on
21 to the next panel.

22 MICHAEL MCSWEENY: Thank you very much.

23 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you. Good seeing you.

24 We're going to have public testimony at
25 the end for any nominees so we're going to move on to

2 the next nomination, and then at the end, we'll offer
3 people an opportunity to testify.

4 We are now going to move on to the City
5 Planning Commission.

6 Our next public hearing will be a
7 nomination for City Planning Commission. By letter
8 dated June 6, 2024, Manhattan Borough President Mark
9 Levine requested the Council's advice and consent
10 pursuant to Sections 31 and 192 of the New York City
11 Charter for the proposed appointment of Raju Mann, a
12 resident of Brooklyn, we won't hold that against him,
13 to serve a five-year term as a member of the City
14 Planning Commission.

15 Before I introduce the candidate, I will
16 review the functions and membership qualifications of
17 the CPC. The City Planning Commission is responsible
18 for the conduct of planning related to the orderly
19 growth, improvement, and future development of the
20 city, including adequate and appropriate resources
21 for the housing, business, industry, transportation,
22 distribution, recreation, culture, comfort,
23 convenience, health, and welfare of its population.
24 CPC is also responsible for the review of and has
25 veto power over all proposals to change the zoning

2 map, the city map, and the text of the zoning
3 resolution, site selections for City capital
4 projects, all major concessions, proposed franchises
5 and revocable consents that the Department of City
6 Planning determines would have land use impacts,
7 proposed housing and urban renewal plans pursuant to
8 state and federal law, sales, acquisitions, leases,
9 and other dispositions of property of and by the
10 City, and the granting of special permits pursuant to
11 zoning resolution. The CPC oversees the
12 implementation of laws that require environmental
13 reviews of actions taken by the City, in particular,
14 City Environmental Quality Review, the State
15 Environmental Quality Review Act, and the National
16 Environmental Policy Act. CPC assists the Mayor and
17 other officials in developing the 10-year capital
18 strategy, the four-year capital program as well as
19 the annual statement of needs. The CPC is also
20 responsible for promulgating various rules,
21 establishing the minimum standards for certification
22 of applications that are subject to the Uniform Land
23 Use Review Procedure, commonly known as ULURP,
24 establishing the minimum standards and procedural
25 requirements for community boards, borough

2 presidents, borough boards, and the Commission itself
3 in the exercise of their duties and responsibilities
4 in ULURP, establishing specific time periods for pre-
5 certification review of applications subject to
6 ULURP, establishing the procedures for environmental
7 reviews required by law, including the procedures for
8 the preparation and filing of environmental
9 assessment statements and environmental impact
10 statements, establishing the minimum standards for
11 the former content of 197-A plans, listing major
12 concessions or establishing a procedure for
13 determining whether a concession is defined as a
14 major concession. CPC also has the power to modify
15 any amendments proposed by the Mayor to change the
16 rules governing site selection and fair distribution
17 of City facilities. It has the exclusive power to
18 propose additional categories of land use actions to
19 review pursuant to ULURP, subject to enactment by the
20 City Council.

21 City Planning Commission consists of 13
22 members with a Chair and six appointments made by the
23 Mayor, one by the Public Advocate, and one by each
24 Borough President. Members are to be chosen for their
25 independence, integrity, and civic commitment. The

2 appointments of all members except the Chair are
3 subject to the advice and consent of the City
4 Council. CPC members, except for the Chair who serves
5 at the pleasure of the Mayor, serve for staggered
6 five-year terms, which begin the day after expiration
7 of the previous term. For purposes of Chapter 68 of
8 the Charter, CPC members other than the Chair shall
9 not be considered regular employees of the City of
10 New York. They are prohibited from holding any other
11 City office while serving on the CPC. There's no
12 limitation on the number of terms a CPC member may
13 serve. The member who is designated as vice Chair
14 receives an annual salary of 73,855 dollars. The
15 other members receive an annual salary of 64,224
16 dollars.

17 The Manhattan Borough President today
18 requested Council's advice and consent to appoint
19 Raju Mann, once again a resident of Brooklyn, as a
20 member of the City Planning Commission. Mr. Mann is
21 familiar to many of us, having served as Director of
22 the City Council's Land Use Division from 2014 to
23 2022. He was recently appointed as CEO of the Battery
24 Park City Authority, a State authority that manages

2 the use and development of 93 acres of the Battery
3 Park City area.

4 I want to welcome him to the dais and,
5 when you're ready and comfortable, if you can raise
6 your right hand to be sworn in.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GALVEZ: Do you affirm
8 that you will tell the truth, the whole truth, and
9 nothing but the truth in the testimony that you
10 provide to this Committee and in answer to all
11 Council Member questions?

12 RAJU MANN: Yes, I do.

13 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you, and
14 congratulations once again on your nomination. You
15 can go ahead and testify.

16 RAJU MANN: Great. Thank you Mr. Chairman.
17 It's a real pleasure to be back here. It's great to
18 see so many colleagues and friends at the dais.

19 I appreciate how busy June is for you all
20 so I'm going to keep this relatively brief and just
21 offer a few words about what I hope to bring to the
22 City Planning Commission. I've spent most of my
23 career working in the public or non-profit sectors.
24 I've worked at the Department of City Planning,
25 served on a Community Board in Manhattan, worked in

2 the non-profit advocacy world, and spent eight years
3 here at the Council, and I'm the President and CEO of
4 the Battery Park City Authority. I've spent a lot of
5 time over the course of my career sorting through
6 regulatory details and policy questions that are at
7 the heart of much of planning and zoning work. I've
8 also had a chance to work closely with many of the
9 actors in the ULURP process and understand how they
10 approach problems from the agency end to the
11 community end, to developers, to elected officials. I
12 hope that my understanding of these technical issues
13 and an understanding of the actors in the process
14 will help the CPC balance the challenges New York
15 City faces with the real work of building consensus
16 around those questions.

17 I appreciate change will not come as
18 quickly as any of us would like to many of the
19 challenges New York City faces but, if I'm fortunate
20 enough to be approved by the Council, I want to
21 highlight a few areas of initial focus at the City
22 Planning Commission.

23 Number one, I hope to help connect zoning
24 and development policy, particularly at the
25 neighborhood scale, with thoughtful capital planning

2 so we're addressing multiple needs and challenges
3 simultaneously. Especially in the context of large
4 area-wide planning work and rezonings, we must think
5 thoughtfully about how to use public subsidy dollars
6 or invest in public space or schools or sewer
7 capacity, particularly in an era of climate change.

8 Number two, I hope to encourage many of
9 the most fortunate neighborhoods in the city to do
10 more than their part to help address the challenges
11 we confront as a city. I applaud the Speaker and the
12 Council here in particular for its work on fair
13 housing, and I hope to be a helpful advocate in that
14 regard at the City Planning Commission.

15 Number three, I also hope to do what I
16 can to make sure the land use process is a trust-
17 building one. At the end of the day, the CPC and the
18 Council need to make very hard decisions about the
19 future of New York City, but it's important along the
20 way we do whatever we can to respond to concerns, to
21 build and grow trust along the process, and work
22 together whenever and wherever we possibly can. I
23 think building trust in institutions and processes is
24 genuinely a collective effort, but I'm eager to do my
25

2 part if I'm lucky enough to be confirmed to the City
3 Planning Commission.

4 I'll just wrap up here. I just want to
5 thank Borough President Levine and his team for their
6 confidence in me. I want to thank all of you for your
7 time. I'm excited about the opportunity to continue
8 to serve the City, and I'd be happy to answer any
9 questions.

10 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you, and thanks for
11 your testimony and your experience here at the City
12 Council. It was always a pleasure working alongside
13 you on a variety of issues.

14 We are in a talk about our housing
15 affordability crisis and our housing crisis here in
16 the city, but also working on a myriad of things
17 right now in the city when it comes to City of Yes
18 and many other big ticket land use items that, if
19 confirmed to the City Planning Commission, will be a
20 big part of but, just taking a step back, your
21 experience here obviously makes you uniquely, I
22 think, qualified to be able to understand the sort of
23 elected officials' side of the equation when it comes
24 to city planning and land use and the tension that
25 builds inside of communities around some of these

2 issues and items, the procedural questions that get
3 called and raised and obviously the political and
4 policy considerations that an elected official would
5 go and go through in determining an item. Through all
6 that experience and also taking, hopefully importing
7 that to the City Planning Commission, can you talk
8 about some of the areas where you think the land use
9 process perhaps could be improved? I'm not telling
10 you to pick a direction in which direction it might
11 go in, but where you might see like a level of
12 improvement around the land use process, where you
13 might see either procedural policy or other changes
14 that might help facilitate, I would say certainly
15 facilitate things like building more housing in the
16 city to modernize our laws around economic
17 development, things like that but, just functionally,
18 I think that most folks consider this to be a process
19 that is warrants updating or modernization. I want to
20 hear your thoughts on that.

21 RAJU MANN: Sure. Thanks for the question.

22 I think it's worth just noting these are hard,
23 contentious conversations often, and so the magic
24 consensus we would all like to see is often elusive.
25 I think that the one place where I'd maybe spend a

2 few minutes focusing on today is the relationship of
3 the capital plan and kind of our development and
4 zoning framework. I do think that there is
5 opportunity to help communities better understand how
6 we're using our public resources in the form of our
7 capital dollars to address challenges that
8 neighborhoods face while also thinking about the
9 zoning and development future of those neighborhoods,
10 and I think sometimes those conversations can happen
11 on parallel tracks but don't meet fully in a coherent
12 way for communities to really understand the kinds of
13 open space investments or school investments or sewer
14 investments that are being made that also help
15 support growth. I think the integration of our
16 capital planning work and our zoning and development
17 policy work, I think is one place where I think we
18 could can always do better, and that's something that
19 the Chair of the CPC has noted, and I think prior
20 Chairs of the CPC have noted as well, that requires a
21 lot of interagency coordination, which is just never
22 easy, given the number of actors involved in some of
23 these processes, but I'd say that's a place where we
24 can grow, but we can also show communities that we

2 are delivering essential services and infrastructure
3 to help support the growth.

4 CHAIR POWERS: Thanks. You're going to be
5 sitting in a position right before the city Council
6 on a ULURP where you'll be hearing probably from
7 Council Members, you'll certainly be hearing the
8 Community Board, Borough President, and others ahead
9 of your (INAUDIBLE). Can you talk about how those
10 actors might be persuasive or influence or even just
11 inform how you might approach a certain application,
12 certainly when there's applications that might have
13 large resistance to them and you're going to hear
14 that, how you find that, weigh those out in the
15 process when determining your vote?

16 RAJU MANN: Yeah, I mean, I mentioned this
17 briefly in my remarks, but I think it's really
18 important that the land use process incentivize,
19 engender trust among the parties involved, and I
20 think that means that the Commission and the Council
21 have to really find ways of responding to feedback so
22 that people feel like when they show up at hearings,
23 that it's worth their time to show up at hearings and
24 that people are taking their opinions and perspective
25 seriously. I think it's pretty critical to the

2 legitimacy of the whole process for people in the
3 process to feel like decision makers are paying
4 attention and are finding ways to respond to the
5 concerns that they're raising. It's, again, never an
6 ability to respond to 100 percent of the concerns,
7 but if people who are showing up at hearings and
8 taking time out of their day to participate in the
9 public process don't feel like people are listening,
10 it undermines the validity of the process, and so I
11 think it's incumbent on all of us to find those
12 opportunities, whether they're big or small, to
13 acknowledge concerns and find ways of incorporating
14 those concerns in projects.

15 CHAIR POWERS: What are instances where
16 you might gear that type of feedback and say, this
17 application is not ready to be moved forward? Like,
18 there's always going to be lots of folks who show up
19 at some of these big hearings to say yes or no, we
20 hate this, we love this, and you're going to have to
21 put those into an equation and figure out, as you're
22 thinking about that component of it, the community
23 feedback so how do you, what are the conditions by
24 which one might find themselves to say, the community

2 has not, we have not engendered trust with the
3 community, we have not built like a foundation here?

4 RAJU MANN: Yeah, I mean, again, I think
5 these are really hard conversations and sort of the
6 nature of democracy, right, to figure out how we make
7 these decisions together, and that's an imperfect
8 process. I'd say there's two things. I'd say one is
9 there's values that I think I have that obviously
10 inform the work around equity and ensuring that we
11 have an environment that's better than the one that
12 we inherited and obviously supporting economic
13 growth, and I think within that context of those
14 values, really understanding what are the pieces of
15 feedback we can absorb from community stakeholders to
16 hopefully advance one of those three objectives, but
17 at the end of the day, the values do need to be
18 somewhat consistent across projects, because
19 otherwise it becomes an ad hoc exercise and so,
20 within the context of those values, I think, I feel
21 like the goal of the Commission, the goal of the
22 Council partially is to really find the pieces of
23 feedback that make these projects better, that make
24 these proposals better. Number one, to make sure
25 people understand they're being heard and, number

2 two, to make the projects and proposals better, but
3 that all needs to be anchored with some value
4 framework about what we're trying to do as a City. At
5 least for me, those kind of three pieces, the kind of
6 building more equitable city, building a city that's
7 better prepared for the future and environmental
8 context and building one that's more prosperous are
9 the three ones that I would highlight.

10 CHAIR POWERS: Got it. We've talked about
11 some of it, but beyond the things discussed already,
12 your experience here at the city Council, can you
13 talk a bit about how you think it has informed your
14 ability to do the job that you're up for now with the
15 nomination you're up for now, and what lessons maybe
16 you learned here through your time in City Council
17 about the land use process?

18 RAJU MANN: Yeah, I mean, I think number
19 one, I certainly appreciate how hard the job is for
20 Council Members that you have to balance all of these
21 competing constituencies in a District. Some of those
22 constituencies are citywide. Some of them are local.
23 You have your own challenges across a particular land
24 use project. You have a million other things going
25 on. You're working on getting a budget done this

2 month so I appreciate how strained the time is and
3 also how challenging it is to balance those
4 stakeholders so I bring a lot of sympathy, I think,
5 just for how hard the job is. Sometimes I think there
6 can be a tendency on agencies to not fully appreciate
7 the challenging work of building political consensus
8 on difficult projects so I think I just bring a lot
9 of sympathy because I've seen it firsthand and seen
10 how challenging it is firsthand. I think that's
11 number one.

12 Then number two, obviously, I've got a
13 lot of experience on the actual nuts and bolts of the
14 mechanics of how zoning and environmental review
15 work, and so hopefully all of that experience just
16 helps me ask sharper questions and have more informed
17 perspectives on projects.

18 CHAIR POWERS: Thanks. The Manhattan
19 Borough President who's nominating you, I think, has
20 talked a lot about the challenges around housing,
21 particularly in our borough, but frankly throughout
22 the city. I think it's been thoughtful, his approach
23 to how to develop and find balance and try to build
24 consensus but without losing the urgency associated
25 with a city that has a under 2 percent vacancy rate

2 right now, that's feeling the rising crunch of rents
3 and pressures on families of an assortment of income
4 ranges. Frankly, right now, people fleeing to go to
5 places outside of the city to find refuge from
6 soaring rents and low vacancies. I'm not going to ask
7 you to talk about how you might vote on a specific
8 proposal. We have a long way to go, but we are going
9 to confront a number of these questions in the future
10 about, and soon enough, about housing affordability
11 and housing supply and the relationship between those
12 two things. Can you talk about how you think about
13 right now the City Planning's role and, frankly, the
14 City's role in confronting those questions and how,
15 if nominated, you might tackle the question around
16 affordability when considering the applications that
17 might be coming for you?

18 RAJU MANN: Sure. It's the question of the
19 decade here in New York. I think the City Planning
20 Commission has a particular role in helping to set a
21 land use framework for the city's growth, which is
22 sometimes not perfectly coupled to an affordable
23 housing strategy. I think, really, at a citywide
24 scale, the challenge in the work is linking our land
25 use policy with our housing policy, which includes a

2 lot of other agencies, especially HPD, to figure out
3 where and how to subsidize affordable housing
4 development and to think about the resources
5 necessary to really reach the lower incomes,
6 especially, which is not really, I think, City
7 Planning, I would say, is not the best tool for
8 reaching the lowest income levels, the ones that are
9 most vulnerable to displacement in New York City.
10 Housing vouchers and housing subsidies are usually
11 the best tools for actually getting help to those
12 communities so I think, big picture, it's making sure
13 our land use policy is linked with a kind of housing
14 strategy and that those two things are working hand-
15 in-hand to address the need and especially the
16 greatest need, which is at the lowest incomes, and so
17 I think the role of the City Planning Commission is
18 really more on the setting the growth and development
19 framework side, which is, how do we help encourage
20 the growth in our housing stock so, if you do have a
21 housing voucher, you can actually find housing, which
22 actually isn't particularly easy these days, even if
23 you have a housing voucher. There's a responsibility
24 there to ensure that we have the housing supply, both
25 at the market rate, middle income, and also, I think

2 it does help those low income, again, for voucher
3 holders, opens up access to housing units that
4 otherwise wouldn't be there, but I think at the end
5 of the day, the housing solution only gets solved
6 with a lot of agencies at the table and also a lot of
7 different layers of government at the table, the
8 city, state, and the federal government. Obviously,
9 there's been a lot of work done at the state this
10 year, but I think it continues to be more, and
11 especially at the federal level.

12 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you. Thank you for
13 answering those questions.

14 Council Member Sanchez, do you have any
15 questions?

16 We'll now go to Council Member Sanchez.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you, Chair.

18 Thank you for being here today, and it's
19 surprising to see that you are excited to join the
20 CPC, but I do think a perspective like yours would be
21 invaluable. I mean, I'm listening to your responses
22 and just skirting around the same question of trying
23 to understand how you, given a vote and the decision
24 at the CPC table, would weigh those questions of
25 affordability versus community concerns, but

2 understanding that we can only speak in hypotheticals
3 here, but you did say that you don't view land use as
4 the way to get to deep affordability, and that's the
5 work of other policies, but I suppose, having worked
6 on MIH, what do you think is the amount that the CPC,
7 that land use policy can get us to development of
8 more affordable housing?

9 RAJU MANN: Yeah, thanks for the question
10 and for the opportunity to explain a little bit
11 better what I was thinking. I think, especially for
12 those households at no income, 10 percent, 20
13 percent, 30 percent, which are not an insignificant
14 portion of the New York City population, those kind
15 of most vulnerable New Yorkers, it's very hard to
16 engineer land use policy to really address those
17 kinds of urgent housing needs. That's obviously where
18 the shelter system comes in. That's where vouchers
19 come in, in particular, where you have a real gap in
20 income, which can't be closed by an affordable
21 housing unit in the way that we subsidize with HPD or
22 MIH so thanks for the opportunity to clarify. I think
23 that's what I was trying to get at there. Yeah, I
24 mean, I think everybody has a role to play. Every
25 agency in the housing ecosystem has a role to play to

2 addressing the affordable housing challenges. It
3 needs to be, I think, in my mind, land use policy
4 coupled with housing policy, meaning HPD policymaking
5 in particular, to make sure that those two things are
6 working together so, where an area-wide rezoning, for
7 example, is happening, that HPD is at the table
8 thinking through where the long-term affordable
9 housing opportunities sit and how they might deliver
10 the most out of that land use project or proposal.
11 That's not something I think the Commission or the
12 Department of City Planning can do on its own. I
13 think the Department does have a responsibility to
14 think about housing growth more broadly and making
15 sure that we are increasing the housing supply for a
16 broad range of New Yorkers, but I don't think that's
17 going to be sufficient for addressing our housing
18 challenges. Again, I think other tools like vouchers
19 and HPD subsidy, investments in NYCHA, et cetera, et
20 cetera, are the sort of kit of parts that really get
21 to the underlying central housing challenges.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: That's helpful. I
23 guess one more. Having sat in several different
24 spaces of land use decision-making in the City of New
25 York, how do you think your approach will differ from

2 the perspective of being a member of the CPC versus
3 how you had to help Council Members out as the
4 Director of Land Use in the Council and other roles?

5 RAJU MANN: It's a good question, and I've
6 been thinking a lot about that. I mean, I hope what I
7 can do is bring to bear some of the experiences I've
8 had from working on these projects to try to identify
9 challenges that I've seen and identify those
10 challenges much earlier in the process so we can
11 actually have the time and space to solve them.

12 That's what I hope to do because I know that it's
13 very hard to unravel some of these complicated
14 questions if you don't have the time to unravel it so
15 what I'm hoping to do really is try to find ways as
16 early as I can in the project's arc to identify what
17 the big and core concerns are, and then hopefully the
18 process is an opportunity to kind of work on some of
19 those issues. I feel like I've learned a few lessons
20 over the years working on these projects and seeing
21 neighborhoods unfold, and it's constantly a learning
22 exercise. I mean, never get everything exactly right,
23 because the future has things that are surprises in
24 it, but I think I've learned a few things from those

2 projects to realize the kinds of common mistakes that
3 are made and hopefully can help work on those.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank
5 you, Chair.

6 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you. Thanks for your
7 testimony. I just want to just add a personal note
8 here, which is I've had the privilege of working
9 alongside you in the City Council, and I find a few
10 people understand the dynamic of land use and the
11 sort of elected official considerations like you
12 have, and I think that would be a tremendous asset to
13 the City Planning Commission, which often, and I'm
14 one of the reasons I think Chair Garodnik does such a
15 great job, is he really understands the balance of
16 all those different factors and has sat in the
17 position of being in one end of the ULURP and
18 certainly understands all the considerations that go
19 into that so I want to commend the Borough President
20 on his nomination. I think you'd be a fantastic
21 addition to the City Planning Commission.

22 RAJU MANN: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.
23 Appreciate that.

24 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you.
25

2 We'll now move on to the next. Let me get
3 through my script. Thanks so much.

4 As noted, we're going to move on and
5 we'll do public testimony at the very end.

6 We are now going to move on to the
7 nomination for appointment by the Council of Helen
8 Skipper as a member of the New York City Board of
9 Corrections. You're welcome to come up to the dais.

10 The Board of Corrections is responsible
11 for the inspection and visitation at any time of all
12 institutions and facilities under the jurisdiction of
13 the Department of Correction, commonly known as the
14 DOC, as well as the evaluation of Department of
15 Correction performance. The BOC must establish
16 minimum standards for the care, custody, correction,
17 treatment, supervision, and discipline of all persons
18 held or confined under the jurisdiction of the
19 Department and shall promulgate such minimum
20 standards and rules and regulations after giving the
21 Mayor and Commissioner an opportunity to review and
22 comment on the proposed standards or amendments or
23 additions to such standards.

24 The BOC consists of nine members, three
25 members appointed by the Mayor, three by the Council,

2 and three by the Mayor on the nomination jointly by
3 the presiding Justices of the Appellate Division of
4 the Supreme Court for the First and Second Judicial
5 Appointment Departments. Appointments are made by
6 three respective appointing authorities on a rotating
7 basis to fill any vacancy. The Chairman of the Board
8 is designated by the Mayor from among its nine
9 members. The members are appointed for six-year terms
10 with vacancies filled for the remainder of the
11 unexpired term. The BOC may appoint an Executive
12 Director to serve at its pleasure with such duties
13 and responsibilities as the Board may assign and
14 other professional, clerical, and support personnel
15 within appropriations for such purpose.

16 The BOC is required to establish
17 procedures for the hearing of grievances, complaints,
18 or requests for assistance by or on behalf of any
19 person held or confined under the jurisdiction of the
20 Department or by any employee of the Department. BOC
21 also issues a report at least every three years on
22 issues related to the Department's grievance process.
23 Such report must incorporate direct feedback from
24 incarcerated individuals and propose recommendations
25 for relevant improvements and include a section of

2 recommendations on how to improve the grievance
3 process for vulnerable populations including
4 incarcerated individuals who are lesbian, gay,
5 bisexual, transgender, intersex, and gender non-
6 conforming. Such report must be submitted to the
7 Council and posted on the Board's website. As a
8 former Chair of the Criminal Justice Committee, I can
9 also testify to how important the role that the BOC
10 plays is to the work that we do as City Council
11 Members.

12 If appointed by the Council, Helen
13 Skipper will be eligible to serve the remainder of a
14 six-year term ending on October 12, 2026.

15 Welcome to you and congratulations on
16 your nomination. If you can please raise your right
17 hand to be sworn in.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GALVEZ: Do you affirm
19 that you will tell the truth, the whole truth, and
20 nothing but the truth in the testimony that you
21 provide to this Committee and in answer to all
22 Council Member questions?

23 HELEN SKIPPER: Yes, I do.

24 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you and welcome. You
25 can go ahead and testify.

2 HELEN SKIPPER: Thank you. Forgive me. I
3 did not prepare an opening statement. I'm in the
4 midst of preparing for a 500-person conference
5 tomorrow and time is really running past me, but I
6 want to thank you for even having me sit up here. As
7 a person with lived experience, it is imperative that
8 as we begin to look at how we transform and reform
9 these institutions that we reflect on the fact that
10 those of us who have been through these institutions,
11 who have been in this confinement, who have lived
12 through these experiences, have a seat at the table
13 as we look at the transformation and reformation. It
14 is also imperative that we as a people, as
15 representatives of New York City, that we make sure
16 that the care, custody, and control of those who are
17 under our purview are done justly or done humanely
18 and adhere to minimum standards and I also believe it
19 is important for the City of New York to not just
20 rest on the fact that minimum standards must be met
21 but that we should be the forefront in this nation on
22 how we care for people who are in cultural
23 institutions and how we reflect and move on what we
24 should do moving forward. Again, I just would really,
25 again, like to extend my thanks. Again, lived

2 experience that has been translated to professional
3 lived expertise sometimes is in short supply, but we
4 stand at the ready.

5 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you. Can you talk a
6 little bit about the role that you see the Board of
7 Correction playing and why you particularly want to
8 serve as part of that? I know you've touched on that
9 in your opening statement, but talk a little more
10 about the role the Board plays and where you see your
11 role in that being.

12 HELEN SKIPPER: The Board of Corrections
13 is, for want of a better word, a watchdog over the
14 Department of Corrections. We are here to make sure
15 that minimum standards are met. We are here to make
16 sure that we develop appropriate minimum standards.
17 We are here to make sure that accountability and
18 transparency is open. New York City DOC is in a state
19 of, for want of a better word, confusion. There are
20 things that are going on that need to be more
21 transparent. There are issues that need to be
22 addressed. There are barriers that need to be
23 overcome. And we are here to ensure that these things
24 are taken care of, again, in a humane and just
25 fashion. Serving on the Board of Corrections, and

2 right now I'm going back to my handwritten notes,
3 this is a chance for me to utilize my personal lived
4 experience that has been elevated to professional
5 expertise and bring about change within this current
6 iteration of our justice system. I believe my
7 experience in professional and academic acumen, it
8 gives me unique personal insights into the
9 difficulties and the injustices that for those that
10 are caught up. My efforts would be to defend the
11 rights and dignity of those who are in these carceral
12 spaces while demanding and upholding accountability,
13 accountability and transparency are what we need.

14 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you. Last year, the
15 City Council passed a Local Law notwithstanding the
16 Mayor's objections to ban solitary confinement inside
17 of our City jail facilities. The Board of Corrections
18 is scheduled to meet on June 25th to discuss the
19 implementation of the law. Do you believe that the
20 Board of Corrections can and should implement Local
21 Law 42 by its effective date, which is at the end of
22 July this year?

23 HELEN SKIPPER: I believe strongly in
24 that, and I will lean on my academic knowledge. There
25 is empirical research that speaks to the

2 psychological effects of solitary confinement. We are
3 not merely just looking at the fact that solitary
4 confinement is just a punitive measure on top of a
5 punitive measure for a system that should be
6 rehabilitative in nature. We're looking at long-term
7 psychological effects and, again, this is empirical-
8 based research. This is not the way that we should
9 move in a spirit of deflection and diversion.

10 CHAIR POWERS: Thanks. The City Council a
11 few years ago passed a plan to move off of Rikers
12 Island, to close down the facilities on Rikers Island
13 and move into borough-based facilities. Is that
14 something you support and can you talk about what
15 role the BOC might play in moving that plan forward
16 or, when actually implemented, what role the BOC
17 might play to ensure that there's a successful
18 transition from the facilities on Rikers Island to
19 the borough facilities?

20 HELEN SKIPPER: I am supportive of that
21 plan, but I do want to note with some modifications.

22 Number one, it is imperative that we look
23 to being more culturally and gender responsive. The
24 criminal justice system as a whole was built for male
25 detainees. When you are dealing with women and

2 gender-expansive folks, we need to be responsive to
3 their unique needs. I don't feel that the current
4 iteration of the plan now is at best responsive to
5 that. I don't feel that the City needs to add more
6 bed space. I believe if we defund and again lean a
7 little bit more heavily on deflection and diversion
8 and alternatives to incarceration, we won't need more
9 bed space and that these funds can be diverted to
10 community-based organizations that are out here boots
11 on the ground as far as helping to tamp down
12 recidivism, helping to bring a trauma-informed
13 atmosphere, helping to lean the system toward
14 rehabilitation more so than punitive confinement.

15 CHAIR POWERS: Thanks. The DOC in my time
16 when I was the Chair of the Committee had seen this
17 concern often which is reported that many
18 incarcerated individuals are not participating in
19 voluntary educational or other programming inside the
20 facilities. How does the BOC help improve those
21 programs or, at the minimum, address that concern
22 that there's a program being offered and many
23 individuals are not taking advantage of it?

24 HELEN SKIPPER: Thank you for that
25 question that you just unpacked a whole lot. First of

2 all, you need to look at the culture and in order to
3 look at the culture we need to look at staff, we need
4 to look at training, we need to look at how they lean
5 into and appear during the course of everyday action.

6 A lot of people don't want to attend programs and
7 they also talk about being a safety issue. As we
8 reflect on training, as we build out training, as we
9 kind of rework the culture of incarceration, as we
10 lean more to a trauma-informed rehabilitative
11 portion, I believe that those concerns about safety
12 will be tamed down. Another thing I spoke of was
13 Maslow's law of hierarchy which basically states
14 that, as we attend to the most basic of needs, we
15 kind of move up and we kind of step up so the most
16 basic needs depend on the physiological which is
17 things like food, water, and shelter. The next part
18 is safety which is about personal security. It's
19 about being able to feel secure wherever you are. And
20 this Maslow's law of hierarchy also goes to staff as
21 well. Staff is only as good as they're trained, as
22 their supervisors who provide that welcoming
23 atmosphere and that does bleed into the culture that
24 is now permeating cultural spaces on Rikers Island.
25 We need programming, and I believe if we instill the

2 right type of programming given by the right type of
3 people, people will attend because not everybody
4 wants to lay on and, take it from me, I spent 25
5 years going in and out, nobody wants to sit there and
6 play cards in the dayroom all day. We want something
7 that is productive and something that can help
8 rehabilitate us as we look to moving outside of the
9 system.

10 CHAIR POWERS: Thanks. I had one more
11 question for you which is we've seen an increase of
12 deaths at Rikers Island over the last few years. It
13 feels like we are now constantly opening up the
14 newspaper or social media and finding out another
15 death taking place. Can you talk a little bit about
16 what role the BOC might play in preventing and also
17 doing oversight on deaths inside the City jail
18 facilities?

19 HELEN SKIPPER: I think we need to go back
20 down to the basics. We're looking at a semblance of
21 care, custody, and control but what we really need to
22 do is fully define what care, custody, and control
23 really is. That also reverts back to what I spoke to
24 about before about staff training. In the 25 years
25 that I did on and off Rikers Island, I was always a

2 suicide prevention aide and I remember even back then
3 that I was the one walking the floor more than the
4 assigned CO. Things like this have to change. These
5 deaths that have occurred on Rikers Island for lack
6 of attention, lack of medical attention, lack of care
7 and concern, they need to stop because we need to
8 have a humane atmosphere, and we don't have that. We
9 have people dying needlessly because someone just
10 looked at them and said I don't care about that.
11 That's not my job and walked the other way.

12 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you. I would ask
13 other Members to ask questions, but they all departed
14 on us so, with that, we'll thank you and
15 congratulations on your nomination and look forward
16 to seeing you on the BOC.

17 HELEN SKIPPER: Thank you.

18 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you.

19 HELEN SKIPPER: Appreciate you. Thank you
20 for your time.

21 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you.

22 Our final public hearing today will be on
23 two Council designations for appointment by the Mayor
24 to the Health and Hospitals Corporation. If you folks
25 want to come join the dance. First, we have Tricia

2 Tate, a resident of Queens who was designated by the
3 Council and appointed by the Mayor will be eligible
4 to serve the remainder of a five-year term that will
5 expire on March 20, 2025, and Dr. Vincent Calamia, a
6 resident of Staten Island who was designated by the
7 Council and reappointed by the Mayor will be eligible
8 to serve the remainder of a five-year term that will
9 expire on March 20, 2026. You guys, welcome.

10 Before we hear from the candidates, I'll
11 review the responsibilities of the Corporation. The
12 New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation,
13 commonly known as HHC, was constituted pursuant to
14 Chapter 1016 of the laws of 1969 as a public benefit
15 corporation whose purposes are to provide and deliver
16 high-quality, dignified, and comprehensive care and
17 treatment for the ill and infirm, both physical and
18 mental, particularly to those who can at least afford
19 such services, to extend equally to all served
20 comprehensive health services of the highest quality
21 in an atmosphere of human care and respect, and to
22 promote and protect as both innovator and advocate
23 the health, welfare, and safety of the people of the
24 State of New York and in the City of New York and to
25 join with other health workers and communities in

2 partnership to promote and protect health in its full
3 sense the total physical, mental, and social well-
4 being of the people.

5 As provided by law, the Board of
6 Directors consisting of 16 members administers HHC,
7 the law establishing HHC that of the 16 members, the
8 following elected officials or their successors shall
9 be ex officio members: the Administer of the Health
10 Services Administration, the Commissioner of Health,
11 the Commissioner of Mental Health, Mental Retardation
12 and Alcoholism Services, the Administer of the Human
13 Resources Administration, and the Deputy Mayor or
14 City Administrator. Ten additional directors are
15 appointed by the Mayor, five whom are designated by
16 the City Council. The President of HHC serves as a
17 16th Director.

18 Under current bylaws, the Board of
19 Directors have established the following standing
20 Committees: Executive Committee, Finance Committee,
21 Capital Committee, Medical and Professional Affairs
22 Committee, Quality Assurance Committee, Audit
23 Committee, Community Relations Committee, Strategic
24 Planning Committee, and the Equal Employment
25 Opportunity Committee. Each of the standing

2 committees, except for the Audit Committee, shall be
3 composed of the Chair of the Board with approval of
4 the majority of the Board. In addition to standing
5 committees, the Board by resolution passed by a
6 majority of the whole number of Directors may
7 designate special committees, each consists of three
8 or more Directors, one of whom shall be the Chair of
9 the Board. The Chair of each committee, both standing
10 and special, shall be designated by a majority vote
11 of the Board. The term of Director other than those
12 serving ex officio and are at the pleasure of the
13 board is for five years. The Mayor shall fill any
14 vacancy which may occur by reason of death,
15 resignation, or otherwise in a matter consistent with
16 their original appointment. Directors do not receive
17 compensation for their services but are reimbursed
18 for actual and necessary expenses incurred by them in
19 the performance of their official duties.

20 I'd like now to welcome Miss Taitt and
21 Dr. Calamia and ask that you both raise your right
22 hands to be sworn in.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GALVEZ: Do you both
24 affirm that you will tell the truth, the whole truth,
25 and nothing but the truth in the testimony that you

2 provide to this Committee and in answer to all
3 Council Member questions?

4 DR. VINCENT CALAMIA: Yes, I do.

5 TRICIA M. TAITT: I do.

6 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you. Congratulations
7 to you both on your nomination. You're free to begin,
8 and we'll start with Miss Taitt.

9 TRICIA M. TAITT: Thank you to the
10 Committee Counsel and Keith Powers and everyone who
11 is also virtual on this appointment. I didn't prepare
12 initial remarks, but I would say that, given my
13 experience as a finance professional for the past 24
14 years, partly on Wall Street and, more recently, as a
15 business owner, I look forward to bringing my
16 financial expertise and savvy and political
17 connections and experience also on boards to this
18 appointment. Thank you.

19 CHAIR POWERS: Okay. Thank you.

20 DR. VINCENT CALAMIA: Yes, I also didn't
21 prepare an actual statement, but I do want to thank
22 you, Chairman Powers, and, again, whatever Committee
23 Members are virtually attending, for having had the
24 privilege of having served prior and again being
25 renominated for this position. On behalf of the

2 Board, I'd also like to express the enormous support
3 that the City Council has provided to Health and
4 Hospitals as we provide care to the community of New
5 York City.

6 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you. I know we're
7 joined by Council Member Brooks-Powers. I think she
8 might have a statement so I want to see if she is on.
9 If not, we'll come back to her.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: I'm here.

11 CHAIR POWERS: Okay, she's here. Hello.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
13 Chair, and good afternoon, everyone.

14 It is an honor and privilege to be able
15 to speak in favor of several of the candidates before
16 us today, including but not limited to, Michael
17 McSweeny who we work with in the City Council quite
18 often as well as Raju Mann who helped to indoctrinate
19 me in the land use process as a Council Member and,
20 last but certainly not least, Tricia Taitt who is a
21 constituent of mine within the 31st Council District.
22 Tricia brings a wealth of experience and management
23 and leadership, having successfully led her own
24 company and assisted dozens more in her capacity as
25 CEO. Tricia holds an MBA in business and a bachelor's

2 of science and economics with a finance concentration
3 from the Wharton School at the University of
4 Pennsylvania and, for 20 years she's been a leading
5 financial professional and why I think that she would
6 be an asset to this Board considering the tremendous
7 budget that Health and Hospitals works with and
8 considering that they are surrounded by many medical
9 professionals. Bringing this skill set I think would
10 be an added asset to the Health and Hospitals Board,
11 and so I wholeheartedly support Tricia's appointment,
12 and I look forward to her continued leadership
13 serving on behalf of New Yorkers across the City of
14 New York. Thank you.

15 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you. I just have a
16 few questions. Dr. Calamia, you served on the Berger
17 Commission on Healthcare Facilities which recommended
18 the closure of hospitals in Queens before the COVID-
19 19 pandemic and, Miss Taitt, you're recommended for
20 appointment by the Queen's Delegation to City
21 Council. Can you talk about the closure of hospitals
22 in Queens which many folks have discussed about
23 leading to overcrowding especially during the COVID-
24 19 pandemic, we saw Queens be an epicenter, and what
25 particularly went wrong there.

2 DR. VINCENT CALAMIA: With respect to the
3 closure, there was one particular facility, which is
4 probably the last privately held hospital, actually,
5 in the state, and the issue was at that time, which
6 the State really did a lot of homework on, was to
7 look at actually what the capacity of the surrounding
8 facilities were and what's called the absorbability,
9 which is if that facility were to close, what would
10 be the impact. I don't think anyone could've
11 anticipated a situation like COVID situation. At that
12 time, particularly the theory was we were over-
13 bedded. We had too many beds and, in fact, we should
14 be redirecting healthcare more to the community, more
15 to primary care, and less to the in-house facilities,
16 and so what did happen at that point, though, is that
17 there were really, and I hope something that will
18 happen in the future with some of the imminent
19 closing that we're aware of, was that there was input
20 by every facility, those that were in fact designated
21 to downsize or to close, and, likewise, information
22 was provided to be sure the surrounding facilities
23 could absorb the closed facility. Closure wasn't
24 actually the goal necessarily. It was transition. The
25 one particular hospital in Queens I'm familiar with

2 did have opportunity for potentially working with
3 hospital systems and decreasing beds and so on. That
4 didn't occur. Some of the other facilities did and,
5 in fact, were able to be incorporated, and Health and
6 Hospitals played a big role. In fact, Health and
7 Hospitals was heavily represented at the time on the
8 Commission and, again, it was done in a very orderly
9 fashion. There was a tremendous amount of input from
10 the hospitals, from the surrounding facilities, and a
11 lot of information and funding from the State to be
12 sure that transition could take place and, again, as
13 we apply those types of principles to some of the
14 facilities we're looking at in the go-forward, I
15 would hope that a similar process will take place. I
16 haven't seen that at this stage, but I'm hopeful that
17 will occur.

18 TRICIA M. TAITT: I think at this moment
19 it's important to have a conversation with those
20 hospitals that are being affected within the health
21 system as a result of closures and impending closures
22 and do an assessment of what are the cost
23 implications, what are the implications to their
24 operational efficiency, staffing, security, so a full
25 assessment of what is going on now with the hospitals

2 that are taking on additional patients to continue to
3 ensure quality of experience and quality of patient
4 care and, after doing an assessment of that, looking
5 and seeing across the system where there are
6 additional resources that can be leveraged, that can
7 be shared with the hospitals that are taking on the
8 additional patients. I do see that the Board's
9 responsibility in that would be to be informed of
10 what's going on in terms of the impact to cost and
11 operational efficiency and to encourage senior
12 leadership and the providers within the system to
13 assess what resources are available to be shared with
14 impacted hospitals and then, of course, to assess and
15 approve, because I assume that I'd be on a finance
16 committee or an audit committee of some sort, but to
17 assess and approve any potential cost implications or
18 shifts in budgets that result because of that so that
19 we can continue to support, again, hospital
20 leadership but also that patients have a great
21 experience and they continue to receive quality care.

22 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you. The Mayor has
23 tasked H and H with running the Humanitarian
24 Emergency Response and Relief Centers, or what we
25 call HERRCs, including the Roosevelt Hotel Arrival

2 Center, which is in my District, and contracting to
3 provide food assistance to asylum seekers, refugees,
4 and recent arrivals. This is for both of you. Do you
5 believe that the Mayor's decision to put H and H in
6 charge of these functions is more consistent with the
7 Corporate's core mission than the missions of other
8 Mayoral Agencies like the DSS and can you tell us why
9 or why not?

10 TRICIA M. TAITT: First of all, as a Board
11 Member, I think it's our responsibility to align with
12 the messages that comes from the office we report to,
13 and I think it is important as a Board Member to
14 continue to uphold the mission, which is to provide
15 comprehensive quality healthcare to all New Yorkers,
16 regardless of ability to pay, so I would be in
17 support whatever measures allow for that and to
18 continue to promote and protect, as both innovator
19 and advocate, the health, welfare, and safety of the
20 people of the City of New York.

21 DR. VINCENT CALAMIA: Yeah, and let me
22 just say I think probably the COVID epidemic played a
23 big role, I think, in the ability of Health and
24 Hospitals to very swiftly move in emergencies,
25 particularly unexpected emergencies that involve a

2 large volume, and the circumstance with the asylum
3 seekers and the quick volume that occurred, I think
4 it did make a lot of sense because Health and
5 Hospitals can move very swiftly as it did during
6 COVID in providing these services, even though
7 they're not necessarily part of our core mission so
8 it included housing, as you said, it included
9 vouchers with food provision, and housing and so on,
10 and so these are things that are not typically in our
11 core mission, but I think the ability to do that
12 quickly was really important so I think it was a good
13 decision at the time. It's my sense now that these
14 are things that, now that we've reached something I
15 hope of a steady state, that we can begin looking at
16 other agencies in the city that are more adept at
17 taking care of these and get back to our core mission
18 which, again, is providing the healthcare which we'll
19 continue for these and all citizens of New York City
20 and all those who are seeking status here so, again,
21 I think that's the direction I certainly feel
22 comfortable with pushing the Board in that direction
23 and I think the Board as a whole probably has that
24 same belief at this point.

2 CHAIR POWERS: Dr. Calamia, you are a
3 medical doctor who's been a medical director both of
4 hospital systems and insurance companies and you've
5 served on the Board of H and H for some time. Can you
6 talk about, without question that experience is, I
7 believe, helpful and instrumental to being a Board
8 Member on H and H. Can you talk about beyond
9 knowledge base in addition to medicine that you feel
10 like might be important to have on the Board right
11 now?

12 DR. VINCENT CALAMIA: I'm very pleased
13 because I haven't met my colleague, I hope, for the
14 near future, but I think Health and Hospitals, again,
15 our core mission is healthcare, it is provision of
16 services to the community, but, in addition, there
17 are a lot of stresses and pressures on all healthcare
18 systems, not just our public healthcare system, and
19 making certain we do things efficiently, effectively,
20 with fiscal responsibility are really critical, and I
21 do think that's something we've seen evolve over the
22 last several years, not to suggest that in prior
23 years there wasn't enormous effort to make sure we
24 could make certain that we were able to maximize
25 revenue (INAUDIBLE) and so on, but I think that has

2 changed significantly over the last few years,
3 particularly working with private insurers and so on
4 to be able to make certain we're getting the revenue
5 of services we provided. In addition, we have also
6 looked, again, beyond just the in-house hospital-
7 based care. I think we've expanded dramatically to
8 look at community care, primary care, preventative
9 care, and value-based care, which is providing these
10 services in a way that's efficient, effective, and so
11 I think many of those things are again, financial
12 expertise, some of them are housing expertise. There
13 are many social determinants of healthcare that we're
14 involved with, and so some of those things, again,
15 are going to involve areas outside of healthcare so I
16 think a broad range of expertise is really useful and
17 helpful.

18 CHAIR POWERS: Miss Taitt, can you discuss
19 why you want to be on the Board and what about your
20 experience makes you a particularly good candidate
21 for serving on the Board and any previous involvement
22 with the healthcare industry or H and H in
23 particular?

24 TRICIA M. TAITT: Yeah. I'm going to bring
25 some of my, what I'm doing in my business as I run a

2 fractional CFO company and so I deal with a lot of
3 business owners with very complex issues, and I
4 definitely feel like I bring that accounting
5 financial savvy to a Board like this, even though the
6 numbers are huge and much bigger. I also manage a
7 team of six, and so being on a Board is almost, in a
8 way, like managing ourselves with respect to the
9 different issues, and we have a sense of not just
10 financial excellence but also bringing compassion and
11 understanding with our clients and amongst each other
12 because finance is usually a sensitive topic for a
13 lot of people and, in working with the executives of
14 each hospital and each health center, I think it will
15 be important to have compassion in helping them
16 understand their numbers and how to work their
17 numbers in order to leverage their budget to do the
18 most that they need to be able to do. I also bring my
19 experience working with Boards. I was on the board of
20 a performance arts company. I was also on the board
21 of a charter school, and our responsibility as board
22 members is governance and oversight and to provide
23 strategic vision, but there were a lot of times that
24 we had to make very difficult decisions, balancing
25 between the mission of the organization and making

2 fiscally responsible decision and, in those cases, it
3 was important to have open communication. I think it
4 was important for everyone to understand clearly what
5 the current financial health and status is of the
6 entity, of the organization, not everyone has
7 financial savvy, and I'm really good at distilling
8 jargon into digestible bits and so, once you have
9 clarity on what the numbers are, what the current
10 situation is, I think you can have an open
11 conversation on how to fix or resolve any financial
12 issues so I bring those various experiences to the
13 Board, one of that in a management space as a
14 business owner, one as someone who's also been on a
15 board and having to work collaboratively with other
16 board members to come to a final decision, and also
17 just someone who has compassion and emotional
18 intelligence as a value within a space where there
19 are probably more medical people on the Board than
20 there are people that understand revenue drivers and
21 cost drivers and things that can affect the financial
22 stability or even how we present to the rest of the
23 world because I know the audits are public, the
24 financials are public, and it's important for, I
25 think, the City Council and all those involved in

2 funding the healthcare system to understand how we
3 are using our dollars.

4 CHAIR POWERS: Thank you. Thank you, both.
5 I would ask folks to ask questions. Just me though.

6 Thank you, guys, for your testimony and
7 for answering questions and congratulations on your
8 nomination.

9 TRICIA M. TAITT: Thank you.

10 DR. VINCENT CALAMIA: Thank you so much.

11 CHAIR POWERS: We will now hear, if there
12 are any folks who are signed up for public testimony.
13 I don't see any.

14 We'll check to see if there's anyone
15 online.

16 With that, we will close this hearing.
17 Thanks. [GAVEL]

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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 July 10, 2024