

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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October 15, 2020  
Start: 10:38 a.m.  
Recess: 11:48 a.m.

HELD AT: Remote Hearing

B E F O R E: Corey Johnson  
Speaker

Karen Koslowitz  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Karen Koslowitz  
Adrienne E. Adams  
Rory I. Lancman  
Deborah L. Rose  
Margaret S. Chin  
Ritchie J. Torres  
Mark Treyger  
Steven Matteo

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

Stanley Richards

Jose Aragio

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AND ELECTIONS

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2 SERGEANT AT ARMS MARTINEZ: Sergeants,  
3 you may begin your recordings.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS PEREZ: Backup is  
5 rolling.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS MARTINEZ: Sergeant  
7 Sadowsky, send us off.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS SADOWSKY: Good morning  
9 and welcome to today's remote New York City hearing  
10 of the Committee on Rules, Privileges and Elections.  
11 At this time would all council members and staff  
12 please turn on their video. To minimize disruption,  
13 please place electronic devices on vibrate or silent  
14 mode. Thank you, and we are ready to begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you.  
16 [gavel] Good morning and welcome to this virtual  
17 meeting of the Committee on Rules, Privileges and  
18 Elections. My name is Karen Koslowitz and I am chair  
19 of this committee. Before we begin, I would like...

20 JOHANNA CASTRO: Does anyone else have  
21 Chair Koslowitz frozen?

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes, same thing here.

23 JOHANNA CASTRO: Yeah. OK, Lance, can you  
24 reach out to her?

25 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, I will.

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2 JOHANNA CASTRO: Lance, should we remain  
3 on line or would you like to?

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: The committee hearing  
5 can stand at ease.

6 JOHANNA CASTRO: Thank you, perfect.  
7 Thank you. Yes, we hear you.

8 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: OK, I'm going to  
9 have to do it from my phone.

10 JOHANNA CASTRO: OK.

11 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: OK.

12 JOHANNA CASTRO: So can you restart from  
13 the top? We, we didn't hear any of it.

14 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: OK.

15 JOHANNA CASTRO: OK, thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Good morning and  
17 welcome to this virtual meeting of the Committee on  
18 Rules, Privileges and Elections. My name is Karen  
19 Koslowitz and I am chair of this committee. Before  
20 we begin I would like to introduce the members of the  
21 Rules Committee present. We're going to be joined, I  
22 can't see if we were joined by Speaker Corey Johnson,  
23 Minority Leader Steven Matteo, Council Member  
24 Adrienne Adams, Council Member Rory Lancman, and  
25 Council Member Debbie Rose, Council Member Ritchie

2 Torres, and Council Member Mark Treyger. I would  
3 also like to acknowledge Rules Committee counsel.  
4 Lance, I hope I guess this right, [inaudible] and the  
5 staff members of the council's investigative unit,  
6 Chuck Davis, Chief Compliance Officer, and Andre  
7 Johnson Brown, Alicia Bessell, and Ramses Bouton,  
8 investigators. We will consider the nomination of  
9 Stanley Richards for appointment to the Board of  
10 Corrections, followed by the nomination of Jose  
11 Aragio for Queens County Democratic Commissioner of  
12 the Board of Elections. Should Mr. Richards receive  
13 the advice and consent of the council he will be  
14 eligible to serve the remainder of a six-year term  
15 that expires on October 12, 2026. Should Mr. Aragio  
16 receive the advice and consent of the council he will  
17 be reappointed to a four-year term that will begin on  
18 January 1, 2021, and expires on December 31, 2024.  
19 Chuck Davis, our chief compliance officer, has  
20 briefed all members of this committee regarding the  
21 contents of each candidate's background  
22 investigation. The New York City Department of  
23 Correction provides for the care, custody, and  
24 control of persons accused or convicted of crimes and  
25 sentenced to one year or less of jail time. By law,

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2 the Board of Correction, or BOC, shall leave, have  
3 the power and duty to inspect and visit all  
4 institutions and facilities under the jurisdiction of  
5 the department at any time. The [inaudible] at the  
6 department's performance established minimum  
7 standards for the care, custody, correction,  
8 treatment, supervision, and discipline of all persons  
9 held or confined under jurisdiction of the department  
10 and established procedures for the hearing of  
11 grievances and complaints. The Board of Correction  
12 is composed of nine members. Three members are  
13 appointed by the mayor, three by the council, and it  
14 says mayor again, under nomination of the presiding  
15 justices of the appellate division of the Supreme  
16 Court and the first and second judicial [inaudible].  
17 Members are appointed to six-year terms and vacancies  
18 are filled for the remainder of an expired term. The  
19 mayor designates the chair of the BOC from among  
20 these members. Although the board members receive no  
21 compensation, they may, however, be reimbursed for  
22 expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.  
23 Welcome, Mr. Richards. Would you please raise your  
24 right hand to be sworn in?

25

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr. Richards, do you  
3 swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing  
4 but the truth?

5 STANLEY RICHARDS: I do.

6 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Do you have your  
7 opening statement, Mr. Richards?

8 STANLEY RICHARDS: Yes, Madam Chair.  
9 Thank you, Speaker Johnson, Chairwoman Koslowitz, my  
10 apologies for, um, not being able to...

11 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: It's OK, they  
12 call me The Kos, it's OK.

13 STANLEY RICHARDS: I remember that at  
14 the, ah, street naming for Adelaide, and other  
15 distinguished committee members. I am honored to be  
16 nominated, ah, for this important and critically, ah,  
17 valuable, ah, position on the Board of Correction.  
18 In 1986, 34 years ago, I sat in a dorm on Riker's  
19 Island in the AMKC, starting another cycle of jail in  
20 prison. My life at that time was filled with anger,  
21 hopelessness, and confusion, fueled by the desire to  
22 only survive. I accepted that narrative and believed  
23 that my life would be a never-ending cycle of  
24 incarceration, release, and reincarceration. In  
25 1988, almost two years in detention on Riker's

2 Island, my time on Riker's ended and my four-and-a-  
3 half to nine year prison term began. Shortly after  
4 entering prison I found education and the beginning  
5 of a life I never thought was possible. I attended a  
6 GED class, passed and earned my GED. I then enrolled  
7 in Madaya College and found myself energized with the  
8 pursuit of knowledge and education. I soon graduated  
9 with my degree, magna cum laude, and started to  
10 believe that life could be different. I understood  
11 that my life was guided by my decisions and I had the  
12 power to achieve the outcome I wanted as opposed to  
13 living my life as the wind blows. Through education  
14 I believe, for the first time in my life that I was  
15 smart, intelligent, a good person, and able to set  
16 and achieve goals. It was at that time I believe  
17 prison was in my past and not in my future.

18 Education in prison gave me the foundation to launch  
19 a new life and make amends for the hurt and  
20 devastation I leveled on my community in Sound View  
21 Houses. In 1991 New York State Department of  
22 Corrections released me to the community. Like  
23 thousands of men and women and young adults released  
24 from jail and prison I applied to many jobs. Many  
25 people who interviewed me told me to get more



2 experience. But no one was willing to give me the  
3 opportunity. That was true until I applied at the  
4 Fortune Society and met Joanne Page, president and  
5 CEO. In 1991 Fortune Society hired me as a  
6 counselor. My job was to engage people returning  
7 home from prison and support them as they  
8 transitioned back into the community. I was able to  
9 give someone a hand, pay it forward, and provide a  
10 different vision and narrative of what life after  
11 prison could be, with hope, hard work, determination,  
12 and opportunity. Since 1991 I have been able to work  
13 on multiple levels in the not-for-profit field,  
14 specifically, Fortune Society and Hunter College  
15 Center on Age, Drugs, and Community Health. I have  
16 had the opportunity to impact the criminal justice  
17 system on multiple levels, including individual,  
18 community, and systemic levels. Joanne Page offered  
19 me the opportunity to work on management level within  
20 Fortune - supervisor, manager, director, senior  
21 director, now executive. I also had the privilege to  
22 work with Dr. Nicholas Freudenberg, distinguished  
23 professor of health at the CUNY Graduate Center.  
24 Over the last 19 years I have had the absolute  
25 pleasure of engaging with and serving thousands of

2 men and women and young adults who walk through the  
3 doors of Fortune, hoping for something better, but  
4 not sure if better is real and possible. The last 34  
5 years of my life lays the foundation of my work and  
6 my commitment to criminal justice reform, on the  
7 table for this committee to have the confidence to  
8 know that I will serve as your voice, your eyes, and  
9 advocate on the Board of Correction. While we have  
10 experienced amazing reductions and reforms in our  
11 criminal justice system, locally, thanks to many on  
12 this call, we have so much more to do to ensure  
13 equity, fairness, and justice in our system. We have  
14 about 4300 people detained in New York City jails  
15 right now. We have a commitment from New York City  
16 Council to close Riker's Island and I thank you for  
17 that commitment. A commitment from Mayor de Blasio  
18 to end solitary confinement, and we're working on  
19 that right now. And a commitment from the City  
20 Council to ensure people impacted by the criminal  
21 justice system have the resources and supports needed  
22 to end the cycle of incarceration by addressing  
23 homelessness, mental illness, substance abuse, and  
24 hopelessness. Imagine what we can do as a system if  
25 our corrections department revise their primary

2 mission and vision statement and the Board of  
3 Corrections was not seen as an adversary, but rather  
4 as a partner and a resource to improve the conditions  
5 of confinement. We could move towards a more humane  
6 and integrated system of corrections that seeks to  
7 support the growth and development and reintegration  
8 of people in custody. I am looking forward to  
9 continuing to work to ensure we hold these words that  
10 guide our approach to criminal justice - fairness,  
11 accountability, redemption, hope, and opportunity.  
12 Again, I want to thank Speaker Johnson and Chairwoman  
13 Kos and the other distinguished committee members  
14 here today. And I'll close with this. As I walked  
15 on my journey I have always thought that my journey  
16 was controlled by me. But I have come to learn that  
17 my journey has always been controlled by my higher  
18 power. I have been blessed with an amazing wife of  
19 30 years, four amazing children, and nine amazing  
20 grandchildren. And my work every single day is to  
21 work to ensure that my grandchildren my great-  
22 grandchildren eventually will come to know this city,  
23 be a city invested in their future with education and  
24 a path towards college and economic stability, and  
25 not a path toward Riker's Island, a jail, and

2 detention. And I have been blessed to walk this  
3 journey with an amazing woman, my wife, Satari, who  
4 together we're gonna work to make sure that our  
5 grandchildren and our great-grandchildren see the  
6 city for what it truly can be. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you. I'm  
8 going to start. We will now open the floor up to the  
9 committee for any questions or comments concerning  
10 the candidate. I can't see, is the Speaker on?

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: No, Council Member  
12 Koslowitz. It appears not.

13 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: OK. Then I have  
14 a couple of question. Do you believe that DOC and  
15 Correctional Health Services have adequately  
16 responded to the COVID-19 pandemic?

17 STANLEY RICHARDS: So I think there are,  
18 there are two answers, ah, to that question. The  
19 first short answer is, um, I think they did an  
20 amazing job in responding. But I think the response  
21 was slow. It wasn't coordinated, and it didn't lay  
22 out a blueprint for how Correctional Health Services  
23 and the Department of Correction will work together  
24 moving forward, both in terms of the pandemic we're  
25 in right now and in anticipation for a second wave.

2 So I look at where we were at when we had, I think  
3 around 5900 people incarcerated at the time of the  
4 pandemic. And we called on the city and the mayor to  
5 move swiftly to release those who could be released  
6 safely and to get them into services and get them  
7 into support, and the mayor did that, which reduced  
8 our population, which was the right thing to do.  
9 Correctional Health moved swiftly to try to identify  
10 and set up protocols for ensuring the continued  
11 safety of those who had to be detained there. And I  
12 think we had a couple of months where we had no  
13 positive, ah, results stemming from, ah, someone  
14 being incarcerated. They set up a way for people to  
15 come in and be quarantined and tested, ah, so that it  
16 doesn't spread to the general population. But what  
17 they haven't done is articulate what is the plan to  
18 manage a second wave. We know they took steps, but  
19 what's the plan? And it's not articulated on their  
20 website. It wasn't articulated in the hearing that  
21 was just held by Health and Criminal Justice. And I  
22 think they're missing a huge opportunity.

23 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you. As a  
24 member of the Board of Correction you voted in favor  
25 of rules to limit the use of punitive segregation.

2 But there is still so much more to be done. What do  
3 you think are the concrete steps BOC can take to  
4 change the culture in DOC facilities?

5 STANLEY RICHARDS: Oh, I, I am really,  
6 ah, excited about what we're gonna be proposing. So  
7 right now, ah, we are closing out a work group to end  
8 punitive seg. We have about 90, ah, 90-some-odd  
9 people in, ah, punitive seg. It is a tool the  
10 department uses. And what we're gonna be proposing,  
11 ah, is what all the experts call for, right? The  
12 model will, will eliminate extreme isolation. The  
13 model will include a pathway back into general  
14 population, so a person can earn their way back into  
15 general population. The reasons for movement out of  
16 general population will be very defined, so everybody  
17 will know what they are. And then the goal would be  
18 to work with people to understand the underlying  
19 issues that, that perpetuated the behavior that  
20 harmed somebody and called for the removal from  
21 general population. So to work on those underlying,  
22 ah, issues so that when the person ends up back in  
23 general population they're able to live without  
24 harming. So we are wrapping up that work. We are  
25 preparing a memo now, ah, to the board and the board

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2 will be taking those recommendations and  
3 incorporating, modifying into the rule package that  
4 we hope to be voting on very, very shortly.

5 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you. Ah,  
6 does anybody have any questions? Counsel, has  
7 anybody raised their hand?

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, first of all,  
9 we'd like to welcome Council Members Cornegy, Kallos,  
10 and Powers, who are not members of the committee, but  
11 have joined for the hearing, ah, and we have a few  
12 members who have raised their hand. First we'll  
13 start with members of the Rules Committee. Council  
14 Member Adams, do you wish to ask questions of Mr.  
15 Richards, or later in the meeting about the Board of  
16 Elections?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Ah, both,  
18 actually.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: OK. Well, then, you  
20 are first for Mr. Richards.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you so much,  
22 Counsel. Welcome, Mr. Richards.

23 STANLEY RICHARDS: Thank you, Council  
24 Member.

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: We have not met,  
3 but your story is so compelling. Congratulations to  
4 you on your story, on your many successes, on your  
5 triumphs, ah, and for being with us today. Ah, what  
6 a great story, great story.

7 STANLEY RICHARDS: Thank you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Um, I just have,  
9 um, maybe one question, maybe two. Um, my, my, my  
10 mother is a retired, um, captain from Correction.  
11 Correction is very near and dear to my heart. I know  
12 several of my colleagues have heard me say this a  
13 million times. Um, my son-in-law, my son-in-law is  
14 an officer. Um, I have a very good friend of mine  
15 who is actually very high in, in the, in DOC, and I'm  
16 very concerned about, ah, COVID, ah, amongst everyone  
17 there. Um, I'm, I'm not quite sure that I'm  
18 convinced that, um, CHS and DOC have appropriately  
19 handled the situation in the past. I hear that my  
20 son-in-law may possibly have COVID for a second time,  
21 um, at, at this moment, um, and, ah, the person that  
22 I mentioned, the other person I'm very close to, got  
23 COVID very early on, um, ah, you know, around, ah,  
24 April or so and had to be rushed to the hospital.  
25 Thank God she is fine now. But I'm not very sure



2 that I'm convinced that there's a handle on the  
3 situation, that there's a handle on the spread, that  
4 there is even that, and I hate to put it that way,  
5 but I will, that, ah, prioritization of concern, um,  
6 for the pandemic within the system over at Riker's,  
7 within the walls, um, of Riker's, and, ah, I'm very,  
8 very concerned. We mentioned a second wave, but I  
9 don't think we ever got out of the first wave. So,  
10 ah, before we can even speak about a second wave I  
11 think that we have to get a handle on the first wave  
12 that continues. So I, I think I just need to hear  
13 from you again, um, in the way that you just  
14 articulated it, ah, so well, just a little bit more  
15 of your thought on how you will be instrumental to  
16 making people like me more comfortable with the  
17 situation there, um, and, and, and the concern that  
18 we have with regard to not just those that are, that  
19 are detained, but also our loved ones who are working  
20 within those four walls as well.

21 STANLEY RICHARDS: Absolutely. Thank you  
22 for that, for that question, Councilwoman. And, and  
23 you're absolutely right. The role of the board, and  
24 we've been playing this role throughout this  
25 pandemic, has been to hold the department and CHS

2 accountable. In every one of our monthly meetings we  
3 have COVID-19 on our agenda and we are asking the  
4 department, just as the City Council has been asking  
5 the department, for a comprehensive plan about how  
6 they're going to handle COVID. And what we have been  
7 saying to them is that we ought to be focusing on the  
8 officers and all of the civilians who come into the  
9 facility, because the reality of it is, is that we  
10 need to ensure that they're OK because they are  
11 connected and they are the ones who's connected to  
12 the outside that could potentially bring the, the  
13 virus on the inside. So we ought to be have a robust  
14 testing program for the officers. We ought to be  
15 having a robust isolation and, and support program  
16 for the officers. I've heard from the officers, and  
17 this is where I hear different from the officers than  
18 I hear from the commissioner. Officers say they  
19 don't have adequate PPE equipment and what I hear  
20 from the commissioner is that every officer has PPE  
21 equipment. What we've seen from Genetech, which is  
22 the tool we use to be a monitor, we've seen  
23 inconsistent usage of the PPE, particularly face  
24 masks, of officers. We've seen them with their face  
25 mask under their chin or face mask not on. And, and

2 what, what we need to do is to be able to hold the  
3 department accountable to ensure that the officers  
4 are the ones who are really being tested and being  
5 cared for because they pose more of a risk to people  
6 on the inside than anybody else because they're going  
7 in and out of the facilitate. And, and you're right.  
8 We have not gotten a response from the department to  
9 say here's our robust plan. What they've done is  
10 they've, they said they've offered testing to the  
11 officers, any officer can get tested. But they  
12 should have a much more robust program. It shouldn't  
13 be if you, if you want to get tested. If you're  
14 working in the facility, where you're, where you're  
15 working next to, ah, detained people or other  
16 civilians, they should have some kind of testing  
17 protocol to ensure that people are not, um, ah,  
18 transmitting the virus. They ought to make sure that  
19 PPE mandatory, no question about it, you got to wear  
20 your mask. And I think the commissioner last week  
21 put out a tele order, ah, saying that if officers are  
22 found not to wear their mask they will be, um, held  
23 accountable. So I think she's taking a, a stronger  
24 stance on that. But we ought to be doing that, and  
25 that should be laid out in a plan that's presented to

2 the City Council, that is presented to the Board of  
3 Corrections, and what we're gonna do is we're gonna  
4 hold them accountable. We're gonna make sure it's in  
5 the public domain at our hearings, ah, and we're  
6 gonna be holding Department of Corrections and CHS  
7 accountable for, for ensuring the safety of everyone.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you so much,  
9 ah, for that answer. Um, it, it, really, if we had  
10 more, ah, like-minded, thoughtful folks like you, um,  
11 present and accounted for, um, actually being able to  
12 lay this out, um, people that have come from, ah,  
13 where you have come from, like stories, like yours, I  
14 think that we would be in much better shape, and I  
15 think that a lot of what you just relayed, um, is  
16 endemic not just with DOC, but also at NYPD is also,  
17 also which we have seen, um, and the nonadherence to  
18 the protocols. So I thank you again for your  
19 testimony and, ah, wish you much success.

20 STANLEY RICHARDS: Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: All right. Next up  
22 we have Council Member Powers, and if any other  
23 council members wish to ask questions of Mr. Richards  
24 please use the raise hand function in Zoom.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Hi, there. Nice  
3 to see everybody. Thank you for your testimony and  
4 nice to see you. We, we speak often in our, in our  
5 respective roles. But, um, wanted to ask you, just  
6 on the solitary punitive segregation rule-making, do  
7 you have a sense of what the timing might be, what,  
8 both from the, you're on the task force and the  
9 board, so where, ah, what that timing might be, or  
10 looking like when it comes to putting out new rule-  
11 making?

12 STANLEY RICHARDS: Yes. So I am trying  
13 to close out the work group, ah, work. We're  
14 finalizing a memo. I'm hoping to do that by the end  
15 of this week. Hoping to get, um, the recommendations  
16 to Chair Austin, ah, and the mayor at City Hall by,  
17 ah, next week. Ah, the board is working on a  
18 timeline to be able to get, ah, to review the  
19 recommendations, to incorporate those recommendations  
20 into the rule package and get that to Law, ah, for  
21 certification, ah, sometime early in, ah, ah,  
22 November. Ah, and then giving the public an  
23 opportunity to review it, as we made that commitment,  
24 and then, ah, signing off on it in, sometime in  
25 November.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: OK, so you'll  
3 hold a public hearing on that with, ah, I think  
4 usually it's like 10 days, or 10 days of...

5 STANLEY RICHARDS: Yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: ...published? OK.  
7 Thank you for the. Um, I'll, I'll, only, I, I, a  
8 number of colleagues asked my questions already,  
9 including, ah, Council Member Adams on PPE and COVID  
10 preparation and Council Member Koslowitz, Chair  
11 Koslowitz, with regard to the other issues around  
12 punitive segregation. But I'll just add that, you  
13 know, ah, I'll add support for, ah, Stanley Richards,  
14 which is that during my time as the chair of the  
15 committee, ah, both as his role in the Fortune  
16 Society, but also on the task force on punitive  
17 segregation and as a board member has been, um, we've  
18 gone to Riker's Island together, we've taken tours of  
19 the facilities together and he's been a helpful voice  
20 and I think good appointee for this, ah, for this  
21 body to have because I think he takes his job  
22 seriously. I think he's thoughtful and he's not one-  
23 track-minded. He really tries to see the various,  
24 ah, issues from the different stakeholders here. I  
25 think he is worth our, um, continuing to be our

2 nominee on the board. So I just want to add my voice  
3 of support for him and, ah, I will be planning to  
4 vote on him, ah, in support of his nomination.

5 STANLEY RICHARDS: Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair Koslowitz,  
7 there are no other council members who wish to speak.

8 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: OK, thank you.

9 Um, now, ah, thank you, Mr. Richards. We will now  
10 move to the Board of Elections. The Board of  
11 Elections consists of 10 commissioners, two from each  
12 of the city's five counties. Each commissioner  
13 serves a term of four years or until a successor is  
14 appointed. Commissioners shall be registered voters  
15 in the county for which they are appointed, and  
16 registered as a member of the political party for  
17 which they are nominated. New York City Election  
18 Law, Section 3-204, Subsection 1, states that at  
19 least 30 days before the first day of January of any  
20 year in which a commissioner of elections is to be  
21 appointed the chairman or secretary of the  
22 appropriate party, county committee, shall file a  
23 certificate of party recommendation with the clerk of  
24 the appropriate local legislative body. New York  
25 Election Law, Section 3-204, Subsection 4, states

2 that commissioners of election shall be appointed by  
3 the county legislative body or in the City of New  
4 York by the City Council. It is for this reason that  
5 the Rules Committee is considering this nomination  
6 today. The Queens County Board of Elections  
7 submitted a valid certificate of party recommendation  
8 on October 1, 2020. This was more than 30 days  
9 before the first day of January of the year in which  
10 the commissioners are appointed. If the council as a  
11 whole does not act within 30 days of receiving a  
12 valid certificate of recommendation the applicable  
13 political party conference within the council becomes  
14 empowered to approve the recommendation on its own.  
15 For example, a Democratic vacancy would be filled by  
16 a vote of the Democratic Party's conference and a  
17 Republican vacancy would be filled by a vote of the  
18 Republican Party's conference. Finally, New York  
19 Election Law, Section 3-204, Subsection 4, states  
20 that if a party fails to file the certificate within  
21 the time prescribed by this section, the members of  
22 the legislative body who are members of such party  
23 may appointment any eligible person to such office.  
24 However, in this case the Queens Democratic Party  
25 filed a timely certificate of recommendation. The



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2 board and its commissioners are responsible for  
3 maintenance and administration of voting records and  
4 elections. The board also exercises quasi-judicial  
5 powers by conducting hearings to validate nominating  
6 petitions of candidates for nomination to elected  
7 office. The board is required to make an annual  
8 report of its affairs and proceedings to the council.  
9 Commissioners receive a \$300 per diem for each day's  
10 attendance at meetings of the board or any of its  
11 committees, with the maximum of \$30,000 per year.

12 Welcome, Mr. Aragio, and will you please your right  
13 hand to be sworn in?

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning. Do you  
15 swear to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but  
16 the truth?

17 JOSE ARAGIO: I do.

18 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Do you wish to  
19 make a statement?

20 JOSE ARAGIO: Yes, thank you. Good  
21 afternoon, everyone. Um, I'd like to take this  
22 opportunity to thank the members of the committee for  
23 taking time to consider my nomination for  
24 reappointment as the Queens County Democratic  
25 commissioner for the Board of Elections for the

2 upcoming term. It has been a pleasure to have been  
3 the Democratic commissioner for Queens County since  
4 2008. I've been appointed to the board's transition  
5 from [inaudible] to the election equipment that we  
6 have to date. This equipment has improved the voting  
7 process for the citizens of New York. During my time  
8 with the board I've been part of a change within the  
9 agency, which has improved the availability of a  
10 citizen to exercise one of the most important  
11 fundamental rights, the right to vote. I believe  
12 voting provides an opportunity for a person to  
13 express their beliefs, concerns, and ultimately  
14 change their future for their choice of elected. In  
15 the course of my tenure as the Queens County  
16 Democratic commissioner I have through my roles in  
17 the Ballot Committee and the Public Outreach  
18 Committee advocated [inaudible] that have improved  
19 the voting process and information to the voter. In  
20 addition, the board's implementation of early voting  
21 again has served as an overall effort to inform and  
22 provide the voter with an opportunity to exercise  
23 their right to vote. While this is just a small  
24 example of changes that have been instituted since my  
25 original appointment there are countless changes

2 which have effectively the voting process an easier  
3 and successful process. I believe that with the  
4 present atmosphere and the courage of the citizens  
5 the possibility of changing the way to vote, the way  
6 voting is conducted is just beginning. I will have  
7 and always have advocated for a process that  
8 guarantees confidence in the voting process and in  
9 the election results, and I hope to be a part of that  
10 mission for the next four years. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you. Now  
12 we're going to go the floor. We're gonna open the  
13 floor of the committee for any questions or comments  
14 concerning the candidate, starting, the Speaker, is  
15 the Speaker here?

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: No, he's not here  
17 yet.

18 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: OK. Um, then I  
19 have a few questions. What steps do you think the  
20 Board of Elections should take to ensure the  
21 efficient and accurate certification of this  
22 November's general election with a large increase in  
23 absentee ballots from prior years?

24 JOSE ARAGIO: Ah, I think the board has  
25 begin, has begun taking the process of implementing

2 those steps. What we're really talking about is the,  
3 the voluminous amount of absentee ballots that we  
4 believe will be coming in. As of last Tuesday, as of  
5 this Tuesday, excuse me, over 730,000 absentee ballot  
6 requests have been made and over 90% of that has been  
7 completed, processed by our staff. Ah, we have  
8 purchased new equipment to allow for the faster  
9 canvassing of the, the ballots and sorting of the  
10 ballots. That actual equipment is being installed in  
11 Queens this week. We've also, um, purchased, ah,  
12 auditing equipment that would allow us to assist in  
13 the actual auditing process of the votes. Um, we had  
14 also implemented the increased hiring of staff to  
15 allow the canvassing procedures and myself in Queens  
16 have actually, ah, had numerous conversations with my  
17 chief and deputy and my counterpart with respect to  
18 steps that we can take to make things and the  
19 certification go a lot faster and quicker for the,  
20 ah, City of New York. I'm not opposed to have  
21 consider, consider, to consider other avenues as  
22 presented by the executive management in other  
23 counties as to how we, we actually expedite the, ah,  
24 certification process.

2 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Um, have you seen  
3 an increase in voter participation since you've been  
4 the commissioner?

5 JOSE ARAGIO: Absolutely, we have. We've  
6 seen a large amount of voter participation, um,  
7 especially now with social media, um, the people are  
8 really actually advocating with change in the present  
9 climate of what's going on in a political environment  
10 has attributed and contributed to that, ah, and is  
11 very appreciated. I mean, we had, when I first  
12 started there was, it was, I think it was a 20% voter  
13 turnout and the numbers have increasingly gone up  
14 more and more as each election passes.

15 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: What policies  
16 would you suggest to better professionalize poll  
17 workers?

18 JOSE ARAGIO: Um, I, we have within the  
19 board had communications with the appropriate agency  
20 heads to try to, um, take advantage of municipal  
21 workers. Um, I think the use of municipal workers,  
22 professionalized municipal workers, as poll workers  
23 would really assist on Election Day, um, and allow us  
24 to implement other things that are already present in  
25 the election [inaudible] which shifts [inaudible]

2 nature, of that nature. Our biggest problem is  
3 actually retaining and employing over 30,000 poll  
4 workers on Election Day and now for early voting.  
5 Um, unfortunately we try to train these, ah, these  
6 individuals and sometimes they don't show up for the  
7 election site, which creates problems in staffing. I  
8 believe the, the use of municipal workers would  
9 assist us in having a set group of individuals who  
10 are willing to work on Election Day that we can be,  
11 that can be counted on.

12 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you. There  
13 was a massive vendor error for absentee ballots sent  
14 to voters in Kings County. The vendor was selected  
15 on a no-bid contract. Do you think the contracted  
16 selection process should be strengthened to avoid  
17 mistakes like this in the future?

18 JOSE ARAGIO: Ah, I absolutely do believe  
19 that the contracts, um, system should be changed and  
20 modernized to allow for such errors not to occur.  
21 Um, I had indicated, um, to the other commissioners  
22 that I would not be opposed to holding this  
23 particular vendor, ah, really accountable for the  
24 mistake that he did, other than him paying for the,  
25

2 the, the remailing of the ballots. Um, provided that  
3 we have other vendors to, ah, to do those services.

4 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you. Ah,  
5 Counsel, I'll turn over to you. Are any hands raised  
6 for questions?

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes. Council Member  
8 Adams.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you so much,  
10 and welcome, um, Mr. Aragio. Very nice to see you  
11 this morning, and thank you for your service to BOE.  
12 Ah, we know, ah, how everyone loves that job so well,  
13 so we thank you so much for your commitment  
14 [laughs]...

15 JOSE ARAGIO: [laughs]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: ...to want to  
17 continue. Um, my question really revolves around  
18 education and training, um, with, with BOE. So I was  
19 curious, ah, just to dig a little bit more into your  
20 response when it comes to legislative reforms,  
21 particularly around ranked-choice voting, um, and to  
22 know your thoughts. Ah, per your response to the  
23 initial question was that, um, you believe that the  
24 Board of Elections, ah, will meet the requirements,  
25 um, with regard to the implementation of ranked-

2 choice voting, and then it says as we've done with  
3 all of our prior obligations with respect to the  
4 implementation of changes in the law, i.e. early  
5 voting. Early voting is my favorite thing to do in  
6 life, by the way. I just want to put that out there.  
7 Um, but with regard, again, to, ah, to RCV, um, it's  
8 noted that the BOE actually missed the charter-  
9 mandated June 1, 2020, planning deadline for ranked-  
10 choice voting, so, um, so that was, their commitment  
11 was not met. So I need some assurance that there  
12 will be better education going, ah, going forward,  
13 ah, and that there will be adherence, um, to training  
14 and education when it comes to ranked-choice voting,  
15 which promises to be, ah, very perplexing to the  
16 voting population.

17 JOSE ARAGIO: I, I appreciate that  
18 question and I, I agree with your sentiment, um, that  
19 ranked-choice voting is the next step in the frontier  
20 of the Board of Elections. Um, there is a commitment  
21 from my end to make sure that our staff is actually  
22 trained, um, with respect to the programs and the,  
23 the process for ranked-choice voting. It's my  
24 understanding that the executive management and the  
25 appropriate management teams have requested an



2 extension of time to move those, that deadline that  
3 you referred to. And, in fact, it was, um, met after  
4 the extension. It's also my understanding that  
5 executive management is actually having current  
6 discussions and I believe there's a meeting set for  
7 this week, if not today definitely tomorrow, with the  
8 State Board of Elections regarding ranked-choice  
9 voting and the implementation thereof. Our board has  
10 taken pride in taking poll worker training to the  
11 next level and employee training to the next level,  
12 with specifically with poll workers who have actually  
13 started online training course for Election Day and  
14 other procedures that we need, and we hope to  
15 implement that as well with ranked-choice voting as  
16 we become more familiarized with the program and  
17 exactly what's gonna happen to us. But I do fully  
18 expect that we'll be implementing it coming up in  
19 2021.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: OK. Thank you  
21 very much, um, for the explanation. I appreciate  
22 that. I don't have any further questions. Thank  
23 you.

24 JOSE ARAGIO: Thank you.  
25

2 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Counsel, is there  
3 anyone else?

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes. Council Member  
5 Rose.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Hi, how are you?

7 JOSE ARAGIO: Good morning, how are you?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Um, you can see how  
9 good I am on Zoom. I forgot to unmute. Um, ah, I  
10 want to thank you, you know, for your service to, um,  
11 the Board of Elections, especially during, you know,  
12 some very trying times. You know, my concern, um,  
13 beside ranked voting, um, is the fact that, um, we've  
14 seen, um, when there is an increase in volume that,  
15 ah, the Board of Elections, um, often experiences,  
16 you know, difficulties and, um, the volume, ah,  
17 promises to be, you know, much higher than we've seen  
18 in previous elections. And, um, I, I just want to  
19 understand, you know, it seems like when we introduce  
20 new equipment into, um, the, the process that, um, we  
21 experience glitches and errors and, um, and things  
22 that I feel could have been avoided had we, um, added  
23 these, you know, the equipment or whatever in a, in a  
24 more timely manner. What safeguards have, have been  
25 put in place to ensure that, um, the increase, ah,

2 machines that you, you brought in to count the, um,  
3 the, the increase in ballots, you know, what  
4 assurances do we have that we're not gonna have some  
5 sort of fiasco, um, like we saw in, you know, a  
6 previous election? Um, what safeguards are there,  
7 ah, especially when we introduce new equipment and  
8 things into the process, you know, pretty late  
9 [inaudible].

10 UNIDENTIFIED: [inaudible]

11 UNIDENTIFIED: Is it the computer or is  
12 the link?

13 JOSE ARAGIO: To answer your question, I  
14 believe the equipment that we've putting in, Clear  
15 Ballot has actually, was put in after the June  
16 election, so we had enough time to work out some of  
17 the issues that may come across with that, with that  
18 equipment. However, it's my understanding that all  
19 equipment that the board, um, owns or purchases is  
20 certified, ah, or, or has to be certified by an  
21 appropriate agency and I believe in this case it  
22 would be the state board. The board puts out a  
23 contract for the requirements and then based on that  
24 equipment that we receive it should have already been  
25 certified, and I believe by the state board, ah, to

2 make sure that the equipment is, ah, is gonna serve  
3 its purpose. Um, unfortunately, like most things,  
4 when you, when you, when you purchase it you start  
5 realizing what the issues are. But I believe with  
6 appropriate staffing and having technicians who are  
7 familiar with the equipment, and also our contracts  
8 do include that, ah, a service contract, ah, with the  
9 vendor to troubleshoot programs that we may have with  
10 the equipment as it's happening.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Well, um, I, I'm  
12 hoping that, you know, we, we don't experience any  
13 of, of those issues. Um, I'm, I'm hoping that, you  
14 know, the troubleshooting has taken place prior to,  
15 you know, the, the election. Um, I also, I'm  
16 concerned about ranked-choice voting, um, as is my  
17 colleague, ah, Adrienne Adams, and, and the education  
18 of the public and, and when is that going to happen?  
19 It's quite a complex situation and it's often, it's  
20 one that's difficult for those of who are a bit  
21 conversant with, you know, with the process. So, um,  
22 ah, is there a timeline for when this, um,  
23 information is going to get out to the public? And,  
24 and, um, how are we going to, you know, sort of  
25 educate them on, on this process?

2 JOSE ARAGIO: Ah, we, as a board of 10  
3 commissioners, we haven't been briefed yet by  
4 executive management with respect to the, the public  
5 outreach portion of the ranked-choice voting. Ah,  
6 however, I do expect, as we have done in the past  
7 with the VS200s and any new equipment that comes out,  
8 we, we hold public meetings when we try to inform the  
9 public as much as possible. We do have, um, our  
10 website, which actually provides as much information  
11 as possible, um, and we're actually starting to  
12 implement the use of videos to explain things to  
13 people. I, I was just on the website this morning  
14 and I saw a whole bunch of different [inaudible]  
15 regarding the absentee ballot, tracking your ballot,  
16 the, the board is taking more of a position where  
17 we're trying to inform the public as much as  
18 possible, do as many [inaudible] as possible. We've,  
19 we've accepted and, and encompassed the use of social  
20 media and I believe that that will probably be part  
21 of our messaging, um, messaging, ah, protocol, and we  
22 do have a public outreach committee that, that, that  
23 responsibility falls upon them to make  
24 recommendations to us, the rest of the commissioners,  
25 as to how we should proceed with that, and I, I do

2 believe that's part of their agenda as I heard, ah,  
3 some [inaudible] with respect to wanting to do that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Um, what's the, the  
5 advent of COVID and, and the need to social distance,  
6 that has created some, um, challenges for the Board  
7 of Elections in terms of space. Um, are we, are we  
8 prepared to handle the volume of people that we, um,  
9 anticipate coming out to vote and, and still being  
10 able to maintain, you know, the social distancing  
11 requirements?

12 JOSE ARAGIO: Yes. Right now in the City  
13 of New York we have a, we're gonna have over 1200,  
14 ah, poll sites. We have over 88 early voting sites.  
15 We're hoping that people will available themselves of  
16 using the early voting sites for those, that period  
17 of time and allow for social distancing. In  
18 addition, the high volume of absentee requests will  
19 also assist with that. Um, and, and we've taken the  
20 appropriate measures within the poll site as we  
21 actually conducted an election in March, which was  
22 canceled, and we did a June primary and we, ah, we  
23 were able to allow and, and allow our poll workers to  
24 work safely and also protect the public. Um, so I, I  
25 do believe we have implemented those things. We've

2 seen what worked and what hasn't worked, and we're  
3 actually changing that to, to try to make these  
4 better. And also I just, as a side note, the board  
5 is also, um, publicizing the use for the website and  
6 in our meetings the use of the Fast Pass and also the  
7 card that was sent in a mailer to allow for more  
8 contactless voting, um, and we're encouraging these  
9 things as much as possible, and also in the hopes of  
10 expediting the line process.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Hopefully you just  
12 remind people to actually open that because  
13 traditionally people just kind of disregard it. Um,  
14 I, I think there should be some special attention  
15 paid to remind people to actually go in there,  
16 because there's, you know, the Fast Pass is, you  
17 know, a part of that mailer. Um, and my last  
18 question is, you know, um, about, what are we doing  
19 to ensure the public about the integrity of the  
20 safety of the absentee, um, ballots and, um, the  
21 integrity of the, the absentee ballots?

22 JOSE ARAGIO: Well, the canvassing  
23 procedure is actually open to elected officials or  
24 candidates, and open to the public and the press.  
25 Ah, we also have poll watchers that appear and

2 regularly these things are actually covered by the  
3 press, and I expect that they will be covered again,  
4 um, because this election is such an important  
5 election. Um, but the process is actually open, ah,  
6 to the public and the process is covered under the  
7 election law in the state procedures, um, and the  
8 process is the process. Ah, you know, it's as open  
9 and transparent as can be and we try to make sure and  
10 allow for access to the public to watch us as we  
11 canvass the ballots. We actually provide notice to,  
12 to everyone, in our website of the dates of the  
13 canvassing and the location of the canvassing.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Well, thank you,  
15 um, so much. I just want you to reassure them that,  
16 you know, um, that the absentee, ah, ballot process,  
17 um, is, you'll be able to maintain the integrity of  
18 it.

19 JOSE ARAGIO: Absolutely.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So thank you so  
21 much.

22 JOSE ARAGIO: Thank you very much.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We want to welcome  
24 the speaker...

25 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Yes.



1 COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES  
AND ELECTIONS

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: ...to this hearing,  
3 who has now joined.

4 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Absolutely,  
5 absolutely.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And the next council  
7 member who has their hand raised is Council Member  
8 Kallos. Mr. Speaker, of course, if you have any  
9 questions, ah, the chair would like to recognize you.

10 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: [inaudible]  
11 Speaker's?

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member  
13 Kallos.

14 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Council Member  
15 Kallos.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Ah, good morning,  
17 I want to thank Council Member Karen Koslowitz for  
18 chairing the Rules Committee, as well as her  
19 leadership of the Queens Delegation. I appreciate  
20 her having me as a guest on the committee today, as  
21 we hear a reappointment for Democratic commissioner  
22 to the Queens Board of Elections. I had five  
23 questions. Council Member Adams and Rose asked my  
24 questions on ranked-choice voting. So I hope to get  
25 through four remaining quickly, as Chair Koslowitz

2 runs a tight ship. Ah, so the first, ah, do you  
3 support using technology to improve access to voting?  
4 In particular, I authored Local Law 65 of 2016 to  
5 provide an absentee ballot tracker, which took four  
6 years to implement, and Local Law 238 of 2017 for  
7 online voter registration, which has not been  
8 implemented. Why haven't my laws been implemented  
9 timely or at all, and will you commit to do so?

10 JOSE ARAGIO: Ah, I, I will commit to do  
11 so. Um, I, I do believe that those, those requests  
12 or, or changes in the law will ultimately benefit and  
13 have benefitted, as evidenced in the June primary and  
14 in this primary, ah, to avail the voters an  
15 opportunity to actually exercise their right to vote.  
16 Um, ah, the, the reason for the delay for the online  
17 voter registration was a partisan issue that ran all  
18 the way up from the state board where the Board of  
19 Commissioners, the city Board of Commissioners, could  
20 not get a legal, an opinion, ah, for or against a, a  
21 technical issue whether or not a signature, needed a  
22 wet signature requirement or a signature was  
23 sufficient in the form captured by the electronic  
24 process. Ah, I believe that the executive order  
25 signed by the governor, ah, in this last, ah,

2 election took that out of the equation and then  
3 allowed us to implement, ah, the absentee ballot  
4 tracking and ballot requests, and as indicated  
5 earlier we have over 730,000, ah, absentee ballot  
6 requests and we're in the process of, of getting  
7 those out to the public as soon as possible, and  
8 we're over 90% compliance with respect to that. I'm  
9 all for, ah, online registration in, in as many  
10 places as possible, and, ah, the board accepting that  
11 and mandating that through our process as long as  
12 we're able to provide verification for the  
13 information of the voter, I'm a hundred percent for  
14 that.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: The Board of  
16 Elections is widely criticized for its patronage.  
17 I've authored Introduction 1248 of 2016, which would  
18 mandate [inaudible] jobs so that anyone can apply.  
19 Regardless if I'm able to pass this legislation,  
20 would you commit to posting all jobs at the Queens  
21 Board of Elections?

22 JOSE ARAGIO: Ah, the jobs at the Board  
23 of Elections as, as the council members are aware,  
24 are created through the New York State Constitution.  
25 Ah, it, the jobs have, the Board of Elections has to

2 have an equal representation of all Democratic and  
3 Republican, ah, members in order to assure a fair  
4 process. Um, I have instituted as a Democratic  
5 commissioner within my, within my borough, um, the  
6 availability to hire as many qualified people as  
7 possible. We look at different avenues to obtain  
8 those candidates, from, ah, nominations from the  
9 party organization through the internet, through, ah,  
10 newspaper, ah, requests or, or advertisements for  
11 technical positions, from poll workers, from existing  
12 workers. So I, I believe that I have instituted and  
13 the board will institute, ah, if, if a majority of  
14 the commissioners so desire, ah, I have included a  
15 robust, ah, avenue of, of obtaining qualified  
16 candidates for positions with the Board of Elections.  
17 Um, I don't presently, the board actually does have  
18 on their website a job vacancy and we do list our  
19 technical positions. Um, I'm, I'm not for at this  
20 moment, um, putting the jobs on the city website.  
21 Um, as I stated before, I believe the state board is  
22 run by the Constitution and, um, I don't believe that  
23 we should be advertising our jobs on the state,  
24 excuse me, on the city website. However, I, I'm for  
25 putting our jobs on the board's website and ensuring

2 a fair process in the hiring and, ah, standardized,  
3 ah, qualifications for all employees and a  
4 standardized review of that application. The  
5 determination of whether or not someone is qualified  
6 should not be ad hoc based on different counties.  
7 Um, in addition to alleviate the, the question of  
8 nepotism, um, I have instructed in Queens County my  
9 chief and the appropriate manager to actually do the  
10 interviews of the resumes and of the potential  
11 candidates and then make a recommendation to me and  
12 my Republican counterpart for that person's job. And  
13 I have on occasion, ah, they have on occasion not  
14 recommended, irregardless of where they came from,  
15 and I've actually not hired, ah, county, ah,  
16 candidates, ah, for that purpose. And also, in  
17 addition, I also had vacancies, a limited amount of  
18 vacancies in the general office and whenever I have,  
19 ah, submitted a request for someone to be, ah,  
20 interviewed I then allow the appropriate manager in  
21 that general office to make that interview and make a  
22 recommendation to myself. Ah, so I rely heavily on,  
23 oh, absolutely, on the recommendation of my chief  
24 and/or managers on the hiring process.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you, and  
3 you touched on it in your previous answer, but the  
4 Department of Investigations found incidents of  
5 nepotism at the Board of Elections, including a  
6 violation [inaudible] conflicts of interest board  
7 through you yourself. Can you share what happened  
8 and whether you paid the fine and would you commit to  
9 following and enforcing the [inaudible] nepotism?

10 JOSE ARAGIO: Absolutely. I, I am one  
11 hundred percent for enforcing the rules. Um, in, in  
12 2012, as I was getting close to my reappointment, I  
13 was informed by, ah, Mr. Davis, Chuck Davis, ah,  
14 whether I not I had received a waiver for hiring, ah,  
15 you know, Rajo, my spouse, as a temporary employee.  
16 Um, upon notification that I needed a waiver, I  
17 immediately fired her since I did not have the  
18 waiver. Um, and again, this came up as part of the  
19 reappointment process. Um, subsequently some time  
20 after, I think it was a year or two afterwards, I, I  
21 actually, ah, entered into a disposition with the  
22 Campaign Finance Board. I paid the fine and I  
23 readily admit that I was unfortunately, I, I made a  
24 mistake, um, and I was, unfortunately the mistake was  
25 relied on based on information given to me by the

2 personnel director at that time that it was, it was  
3 fine. Ultimately, the responsibility was mine to do  
4 a little bit more due diligence. As a result of  
5 that, um, I have encouraged and we have created  
6 processes to try to prevent other commissioners or  
7 other employees from making the mistake that I made.  
8 Ah, we now provide the policy and procedures to not  
9 only the, the hired staff but new commissioners now  
10 receive that. I never got a policy and procedure  
11 guide as I became a commissioner. I make sure that  
12 new commissioners now get that so they don't make the  
13 same mistake. In addition, when I was the president  
14 of the board in 2014 we again reaffirmed our, ah,  
15 procedures with respect to anti-corruption and  
16 nepotism and we actually post those, our procedures  
17 are posted on the website. Um, I also have  
18 implemented the use of a questionnaire in the hiring  
19 process in Queens County, which has incorporated some  
20 of the recommendations by the DOI in their report.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you. My  
22 last question, I thank the chair for her indulgence,  
23 most elections in New York City have few lines, but  
24 every four years we have presidential elections and  
25 the number one complaint is long lines. And during a

2 pandemic that could be a serious deterrent to voting,  
3 what will you do as commissioner to eliminate these  
4 long lines? Would you support splitting up so-called  
5 super poll sites? Do you have other solutions or  
6 proposals?

7 JOSE ARAGIO: Ah, the issue with the  
8 super poll sites is as, as the board has made  
9 abundantly clear, is the availability to have  
10 accessible poll sites where we can reduce the number  
11 of [inaudible]. Ah, I'm always open to finding as  
12 many poll sites that are accessible and ADA compliant  
13 to allow that to happen. But the immediate steps  
14 that we've taken right now is, um, the use of the  
15 Fast Pass, the information card. We've actually  
16 hired, ah, the board has a plan to hire line managers  
17 who will pull people out of the line and send them to  
18 the EDA, the correct EDA table, in order so that they  
19 could vote. They will, you know, we've done it with,  
20 ah, early voting. We used that as a step to allow us  
21 to try to reduce the amount of people coming out on  
22 Election Day. The absentee ballots, of course, ah,  
23 will also reduce that amount. But we're totally  
24 committed to trying to reduce that number and have



2 that, that wait time way below the recommendation and  
3 requests of various parties.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Those were my  
5 questions. Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair Koslowitz,  
7 there are no other council members who wish to speak.

8 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: OK. And with  
9 that, unless, ah, we're gonna ask for a roll call  
10 from the clerk.

11 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Good morning,  
12 William Martin, committee clerk. Roll call vote,  
13 Committee on Rules, Privileges and Elections, on M-  
14 255 and M-256, which are coupled. Chair Koslowitz.

15 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Ah, can I explain  
16 my vote? I just want to say I, I vote aye for both  
17 candidates and I just want to say to, ah, Jose Aragio  
18 it's a pleasure, you serve Queens very well. I voted  
19 for you in 2017 and I'm voting for you now, and I  
20 won't be here the next time to vote for you, sorry.  
21 But I vote aye on both.

22 JOSE ARAGIO: Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Matteo.  
24  
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2 MINORITY LEADER MATTEO: I'm voting, ah,  
3 respectfully, no on 255 and 1467, and yes on the  
4 other things.

5 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: I'm sorry,  
6 Councilman, just one more time? My apologies.

7 MINORITY LEADER MATTEO: Can you hear me,  
8 Billy?

9 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Yes, my  
10 apologies. One more time, I'm sorry.

11 MINORITY LEADER MATTEO: That's OK. No  
12 on 255, 1467.

13 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: OK.

14 MINORITY LEADER MATTEO: And aye on the  
15 other one. Thank you.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: OK. Thank you.  
17 Lancman.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: Yes.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Rose.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Yes. Aye on both.

21 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Torres.  
22 Treyger. Adams.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Congratulations to  
24 Mr. Richards and Mr. Aragio. I vote aye on all.

25 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN:

3 SPEAKER JOHNSON: I vote aye on both.

4 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

5 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: M-255 is adopted  
7 by the committee, 5 in the affirmative, 1 in the  
8 negative, and no abstentions.

9 UNIDENTIFIED: Billy?

10 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Yes?

11 UNIDENTIFIED: Um, can we, Council Member  
12 Treyger will be joining us shortly.

13 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: OK, I can, want  
14 to wait or announce? I can announce the vote now and  
15 call in later, or I can wait, or he's coming in right  
16 now? OK.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Why don't we hold the  
18 vote open?

19 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Where is he,  
20 Treyger? What happened here?

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr. Clerk?

22 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Yes?

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We may have Council  
24 Member Torres back.

25

2 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: And Council  
3 Member [inaudible].

4 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

5 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Council Member  
6 Torres?

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hold on.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Thank you.  
9 Council Member Treyger?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Ah, yes, and I,  
11 I appreciate the chair's, ah, and the committee's  
12 time. I simultaneously have a call with Dr. Long,  
13 ah, with regards to testing strategy in schools, all  
14 at the same time. So, so my apologies. I just  
15 wanted just to thank the chair, ah, Karen Koslowitz,  
16 and, and the entire committee for their, for their  
17 work and making sure that folks have an opportunity  
18 to, to get the information which they have. I just  
19 want to, just before I vote, just to reemphasize  
20 again the importance of language access, the  
21 importance of interpreters at, at poll sites,  
22 including Russian speaking. Ah, this has been an  
23 issue that's deeply, deeply personal to me and folks  
24 I represent, um, and I, I really just want to  
25 underscore that. Ah, and with that I do vote aye,

2 and I thank the chair again for her leadership and  
3 for her time. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Thank you. M-  
5 255 with a vote of 7 in the affirmative, 1 in the  
6 negative, and no abstentions, and M-256 with a vote  
7 of 8 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative, and no  
8 abstentions. Both items have been adopted by the  
9 committee. Thank you.

10 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: This committee is  
12 adjourned.

13 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you, everyone.

14 JOHANNA CASTRO: Thank you, Chair. Um,  
15 the live has ended and we ended this hearing.

16 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you very much,  
17 council members.

18 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you, congratulations  
19 to both.

20 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Yes.

21 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date October 25, 2020