

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND ETHICS

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May, 14, 2019

Start: 1:00 p.m.

Recess: 1:16 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway-Committee Rm, 14th Fl.

B E F O R E:

COUNCIL MEMBERS: STEVEN MATTEO
MARGARET S. CHIN
VANESSA L. GIBSON
KAREN KOSLOWITZ

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

Council Member Barry Grodenchik
Chair of the Committee on Parks and Recreation

2 [sound check] [pause] [gavel]

3 CHAIRPERSON MATTEO: Good afternoon,
4 everyone. I'm Steve Matteo, Chair of the Standards
5 and Ethics Committee. I've been joined by my
6 colleagues, Council Members Koslowitz, Gibson, and
7 Chin. Today the Committee on Standards and Ethics
8 met in executive session on an open matter concerning
9 Council Member Barry Grodenchik. At our last meeting
10 on this matter on April 29, 2019, the Committee
11 issued formal disciplinary charges against Council
12 Member Grodenchik in connection with evidence that he
13 engaged in sexual harassment against a city council
14 staff member and scheduled a disciplinary hearing to
15 commence yesterday, May 13, 2019. During the past
16 two weeks, the special counsel hired by the City
17 Council for this proceeding has conducted additional
18 investigation in preparation for the hearing. On
19 Friday, May 10, 2019, Council Member Grodenchik
20 counsel contacted committee staff to state that the
21 council member no longer wish to contest the charges
22 against him and would like to resolve the matter
23 without a formal hearing. We then decided to delay
24 the hearing one day to explore rather resolution that
25 was in the best interest of the council was possible.

2 Because the special counsel informed us that the case
3 against Council Member Grodenchik is strong and the
4 violations of council policy are serious, the
5 Committee could only forego the hearing if Council
6 Member Grodenchik agreed to terms in line with what
7 the Committee was likely to recommend imposing at the
8 conclusion of the hearing. An important
9 consideration about whether to proceed with the
10 hearing was also the impact the hearing process would
11 have on the many witnesses against Council Member
12 Grodenchik, especially the staff member the council
13 member harassed. I am pleased to now say that in
14 consultation with the Complainant and the Special
15 Counsel, the Committee by unanimous vote, has reached
16 a resolution with the council member that we believe
17 is in the best interest of the City Council, its
18 member and staff and most importantly, the
19 Complainant in this case. Council Member Grodenchik
20 has fully admitted to paying unwelcome and
21 inappropriate attention to a female staffer because
22 of her gender. He has expressed remorse for causing
23 the staffer harm because of her gender and desire to
24 change his behavior. He'll be making a public
25 statement shortly that he admits to all the charges

2 against him. The charges include discrimination
3 against and harassment of a female staffer paying
4 unwelcome and inappropriate attention to the staffer
5 regularly for over a year, blowing a kiss at her and
6 only her during a professional meeting, hugging and
7 Kissing her and only her in a way that caused her
8 embarrassment and left her to avoid attending
9 meetings and council business conducted at City Hall.
10 The charges against Council Member Grodenchik which
11 he admits to in full will be posted on the council
12 website in connection with today's meeting. In
13 recognition of his violating council policy, Council
14 Member Grodenchik has agreed to voluntarily resign as
15 Chair of the Committee on Parks and Recreation. He
16 has also agreed to participate in a specialized
17 sexual harassment training at his own expense. The
18 specific training will be selected by me and must be
19 completed within 30 days after selection. This
20 committee takes violation of the council's anti-
21 discrimination and harassment policy, including
22 sexual harassment, very seriously and will not
23 tolerate the type of behavior that Council Member
24 Grodenchik engaged in. We believe the consequences
25 here are fair and appropriate and reflect the values

2 of the City Council. With that said, I'm going to
3 invite Council Member Grodenchik to come in and turn
4 the floor over to him once he comes in. [Council
5 Member Grodenchik enters room]

6 Council member welcome, thank you, and
7 whenever you're ready.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I hereby
9 fully acknowledge and accept the allegations
10 specified in paragraphs 4 through 11 of the charges
11 brought by the Committee on Standards on Ethics. I
12 admit that I engaged in conduct set forth in the
13 charges and violations of the New York City Charter,
14 Section 45 of the Council's Anti-Discrimination and
15 Harassment Policy in Council Rule 10.80, by public
16 statement of April 4, 2019 which was made prior to my
17 having reviewed. I've been made fully aware -- I'm
18 sorry -- been made aware of the full charges did not
19 fully or accurately reflect my conduct. I understand
20 that my actions caused the council staff member to
21 suffer embarrassment, stress, and discomfort and
22 emotional distress and that her work environment was
23 adversely and negatively affected. I am deeply sorry
24 for my conduct and for any harm suffered by the
25 counsel staff member as a result of my conduct. I've

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2 committed to attending sexual harassment at my own
3 cost in order to make sure that I do not violate
4 council policy again a do not make anyone else feel
5 uncomfortable on the basis of their gender in the
6 workplace. I also as a result of my conduct am
7 voluntarily resigning my chairmanship of the
8 Committee on Parks and Recreation. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON MATTEO Thank you, council
10 member. I am now going to make a Motion to Hold this
11 Matter in Abeyance pending Council Member
12 Grodenchik's completion of the training. Do I have
13 second?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Second Motion.

15 CHAIRPERSON MATTEO Recognize the second
16 from Margaret Chin. All in favor, say Aye.

17 COUNCIL MEMBERS: Aye [All Council
18 Members].

19 CHAIRPERSON MATTEO The "Ayes" have it.
20 Before adjourning, I would like to remind the public
21 that members of the committee are bound by
22 confidentiality agreement not to discuss this matter
23 any further, and with that I'm adjourning today's
24 hearing. Thank you.

25

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 May 20, 2019