

COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

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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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MONDAY, MARCH 7, 2022

Start: 10:50 A. M.

Recess: 1:28 P. M.

HELD AT: HYBRID HEARING - COUNCIL CHAMBERS
CITY HALL

B E F O R E: HON. KEITH POWERS, CHAIRPERSON

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

ADRIENNE E. ADAMS

JOSEPH C. BORELLI

JUSTIN L. BRANNAN

GALE BREWER

SELVENA BROOKS-POWERS

CRYSTAL HUDSON

RAFAEL SALAMANCA

PIERINA ANA SANCHEZ

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

LINCOLN RESTLER, NANTASHA WILLIAMS, KALMAN YEGER

COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

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

JUMAANE WILLIAMS,
NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC ADVOCATE

GEORGIA PESTANA,
NOMINEE FOR THE NEW YORK CITY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST
BOARD

IFEOMA IKE
NOMINEE FOR THE NEW YORK CITY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST
BOARD

1 COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS 3

2 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: This is a mic check for The
3 Committee on Rules, Privileges and Elections. Today
4 is March 7, 2022. We are in The City Council
5 Chambers, and this is Owen Kotowski.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [INAUDIBLE 00:00:044] stream
7 the recordings.

8 AUTOMATED ANNOUNCEMENT: Recording in progress.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Stream has been confirmed.

10 Good morning, and welcome to New York City
11 Council's Hybrid Committee Hearing on Rules,
12 Privileges and Elections.

13 Everyone please turn on your video as this time
14 and silence all electronic devices; all written
15 testimony can be submitted to
16 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, that is
17 testimony@council.nyc.gov .

18 Thank you. Chair Powers, we are ready to begin.

19 CHAIRPERSON POWERS:

20 [GAVELING IN] [GAVEL SOUND]

21 Good morning, and welcome to The Committee on
22 Rules, Privileges and Elections. My name is Keith
23 Powers, I am the Chair of this committee.

24 Before we begin the hearing this morning, I would
25 like to introduce the council members of this

2 committee who have joined here today. We are joined
3 by: Council Member Justin Brannan, virtually;
4 Council Member Gale Brewer; Council Member Selvena
5 Brooks-Powers, virtually; Council Member Crystal
6 Hudson; Council Member Pierina Ana Sanchez; and we
7 may be joined by others shortly.

8 I would like to also, before we begin,
9 acknowledge the Rules Committee Counsel, Lance
10 Polivy, and the staff members of the Council's
11 Investigative Unit Chuck Davis, The Chief Compliance
12 Officer; and Investigators Alycia Vassell and
13 Ramses Boutin, who I think are here with us today as
14 well.

15 Today the Rules Committee will be considering the
16 nominations of two individuals - Georgia Pestana and
17 Ifeoma Ike to the New York City Conflicts of
18 Interests Board.

19 Miss Pestana has been nominated by the City
20 Comptroller, and Miss Ike has been nominated by our
21 Public Advocate.

22 For background, Conflicts of Interest Board is
23 the entity that serves to provide clear guidance to
24 public employees regarding the Conflict of Interest
25 laws codified in the New York City Chapter 68, which

2 lays out the type of conduct prohibited by public
3 servants. The board is tasked with achieving this
4 goal through training, education, and the issuance
5 and publication of advisory opinions relating to
6 conduct which may violate the City's Conflict of
7 Interest Law.

8 We are also so joined here, of course, by our
9 Public Advocate Jumaane Williams as well.

10 The board also adopts rules to implement and
11 interpret the provisions of the Conflict of Interest
12 Laws; it reviews and makes decisions on alleged
13 conflict violations, and has the power to impose
14 fines up to \$25,000 per violation and suspension or
15 dismissal of a City employee when deemed appropriate.

16 The board also collects and reviews financial
17 disclosure reports.

18 The board consists of five members who are
19 appointed by The Mayor with the advice and consent of
20 The City Council -- as today's hearing proves. The
21 Mayor must also designate one of these members to
22 serve as the Chair of the Board.

23 The Charter states that these members should be
24 chosen for their "independence, integrity, civic
25 commitment and high ethical standards".

2 Board members serve a six-year term and are
3 prohibited to serving no more than two consecutive
4 six-year terms pursuant New York City Charter §
5 2602(c).

6 These board members are mandated to meet at least
7 once per month and are prohibited from holding public
8 office, seeking election to any public office, being
9 a public employee in any jurisdiction, holding
10 political party office, or appearing as a lobbyist
11 before the City pursuant to Charter § 2602(b).

12 Board members are entitled to receive
13 compensation in the amount of \$250.00 each calendar
14 day that they perform work for the board, and the
15 Chair is entitled to receive 275 days (sic) per day
16 of service.

17 And perhaps most notably and famously, we are
18 very cognizant of the fantastic Twitter account of
19 the Conflict of Interest Boards as well. And, if you
20 aren't, I highly recommend it.

21 Uh, today we have two candidates who are here
22 before us. We are going to hear from them in order.
23 The first one is Georgia Pestana, who is a resident
24 of Manhattan -- we like that -- a candidate for
25 appointment by The Comptroller to the Conflict of

2 Interest Board, and if she receives the advice and
3 consent of this council, she will serve six-year term
4 that begins on April 1, 2022 and expires on March 31,
5 2028.

6 Following her, we will hear from Ifeoma Ike, a
7 resident of Brooklyn and a candidate for appointment
8 by the Public Advocate to the Conflict of Interest
9 Board, if she receives the invite to the consent of
10 this city council, she will serve six-year term that
11 begins on April 1, 2022 and expires on March 31,
12 2028.

13 Before we get started, we are going to start with
14 Miss Pestana, we are going to ask you to raise your
15 hand and be sworn in by our counsel, and then we will
16 ask you and invite you to do an opening statement.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you swear to tell the
18 truth, the whole truth, and nothing by the truth?

19 GEORGIA PESTANA: I do.

20 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Great, thank you. You, uh,
21 if you would like to make an opening statement here
22 today before we go in to questions?

23 GEORGIA PESTANA: Thank you.

24 Good morning, Chair Powers and distinguished
25 members of the Rules, Privileges and Elections

2 Committee. It is my pleasure to come before you to
3 introduce myself to a few of you, and say hello again
4 to others and answer your questions relating to my
5 nomination by The Comptroller for appointment to the
6 New York City Conflicts of Interest Board.

7 I also want to thank Comptroller, Brad Lander,
8 for nominating me to this important role. I am
9 honored by this opportunity.

10 As I am sure you know, I was most recently the
11 City's Corporation Counsel and worked as a lawyer for
12 the City of New York for more than 34 years before I
13 retired at the end of February.

14 During that time, I had many interactions with
15 the COIB... (CROSS-TALK)

16 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: [INAUDIBLE 00:06:28]

17 GEORGIA PESTANA: Oh, sorry. Is this better?

18 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Yes, it is better.

19 GEORGIA PESTANA: Okay.

20 In addition to filing annual financial disclosure
21 statements and attending trainings, I also had
22 occasion to telephone their attorney of the day to
23 ask random questions that arose in litigation or
24 other legal matters when I was Chief of the Labor and
25 Employment Division.

2 I also called a few times over the years to
3 report what I thought might be violations of the
4 Conflict of Interest law.

5 Regardless for the reason for my call, I was
6 always impressed by the responsiveness and dedication
7 of everyone I encountered. Staff asked thoughtful
8 questions and were responsive to the issues that I
9 raised, or referred me to the general counsel or the
10 Executive Director if the matter I raised warranted
11 that level of attention.

12 My interactions with board members occurred when
13 the Law Department was representing the COIB in
14 litigation or on occasions when we thought an
15 affidavit or other submission by the COIB would be
16 helpful in litigation -- even though the COIB was not
17 a party.

18 Over several administrations, board members
19 displayed a profound comprehension of the Conflict of
20 Interest Law, the rationales, virtue, requirements,
21 and prohibitions, and a strong commitment to
22 government ethics.

23 But, even strong institutions can be improved.
24 The Council's 2019 Charter Revision Commission
25 recognized that the independence of the board, both

2 actual and perceived, would be strengthened by the
3 replacement of two board members appointed by the
4 mayor with board members appointed by two other
5 citywide elected officials -- The Comptroller and the
6 Public Advocate -- with all five members of the board
7 subject to confirmation by the City Council.

8 Along, with amendments to Chapter 68 that the
9 council enacted in 2018, which narrowed the use of
10 advisory opinions and required the COIB to codify
11 interpretations of the law and standards that applied
12 over the last 30 years, changes have improved not
13 only the operations of COIB and facilitated access to
14 information, but should also crystalize the
15 impartiality and independence of the board.

16 Change is often invigorating, and I would be
17 grateful to be a board member at a time when these
18 changes are taking root. I believe my experience as
19 an attorney representing the City, its officials,
20 including the council and its members, and other
21 public servants in a wide variety of matters, over 34
22 years, gives me a useful perspective to contribute to
23 the board's discussions and deliberations. In
24 particular, my background of Chief of Labor and
25 Employment Law for 10 years provides a solid

2 grounding to analyze some issues that may come before
3 the board.

4 The knowledge that I have accumulated working in
5 multiple administrations with a variety of agencies
6 and public officials and their staffs, provide an
7 understanding of city government and operations that
8 should be beneficial to the work of the board.

9 I am excited and humbled by the opportunity to
10 continue to serve our city as a Conflicts of Interest
11 board member, and thank Comptroller Lander for the
12 nomination and The Council for its consideration.

13 I am happy to answer any questions you may have.
14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you, and
16 congratulations on your nomination.

17 I also wanted to note that we've been joined by
18 Council Member Borelli, Council Member Nantasha
19 Williams, Council Member Yeger, and as I mentioned,
20 Council Member Brannan and Council Member Brooks -
21 Powers virtually as well.

22 Just to do a few questions, and then I'll hand it
23 over to my colleagues, uh, to begin here, though, I
24 just... Your testimony notes, "strong institutions
25 can be improved" and note some of the ones that have

2 happened in the recent years including something that
3 could lead to your nomination, of course here as
4 well, can you give us other thoughts on where you
5 believe the board and this agency could be
6 strengthened and how... What we think [INAUDIBLE
7 00:10:01] perceive a strong institution it is today,
8 and how that can be improved and what you might offer
9 to that?

10 GEORGIA PESTANA: I think that the changes that
11 were made as a result of the 2019 Charter revision
12 are going to be taking root now. And, the changes to
13 the board as well as the requirement that there be a
14 three-member quorum will also... Uh, and will also
15 make changes to the board. So, once I am there, I
16 think will talk to the other board members and get an
17 understanding of what they think works and does not
18 work.

19 I know that there is a requirement in Chapter 68
20 itself that they do a periodic, I think it is every
21 five years, review of their structure and rules and
22 make recommendations to this body for changes. So, I
23 would like to know where we are in that five years
24 and prepare for that -- since if I am appointed, it
25 will be a six-year term. It will fall in there

2 somewhere that we get to make recommendations to this
3 body, and I intend to do a review to... with the
4 other board members and the staff to make those
5 recommendations. But, at this point, I do not really
6 know what I would recommend.

7 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Got it. Uhm, obviously COIB
8 is an agency that governs so much of our lives here
9 as public servants and elected officials. How would
10 you ensure fines and penalties are fair and equitable
11 for violations of the Conflict of Interests Laws?
12 And do you have any recommendations for how to
13 improve the current system?

14 GEORGIA PESTANA: So, I think that the current
15 system is strong. I know that the... Well, the
16 board acts by consensus, they have to have at least
17 three votes to make a determination. I want to see
18 how that works. And, I ,you know, the lawyer in me
19 would want to know the precedent for whatever action
20 we are intending to take to make sure that it is
21 consistent across the board regardless of who the
22 respondent is. I would want to know what has been
23 decided in the past in this or similar situations.
24 Or if it is a completely novel situation, I would be
25 aware that we would be making a new law. So, I think

2 relying on precedent, like lawyers do, is what I...
3 the approach that I will take.

4 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Got it. And, what is your
5 position on the board's use of public and private
6 warning letters to address an alleged or purported
7 violation of the Conflict of Interests Laws?

8 GEORGIA PESTANA: I think that they could both be
9 useful. The private warning letters, it is my
10 understanding, were issued as a result of when the
11 board did not think that there was enough of, uh,
12 evidence to prove a violation, or if it was a
13 technical, uh, violation where ,you know, it wasn't
14 cost effective with the resources to implement that.
15 I do know that as a result of the litigation by the
16 New York Times, the current chair has said that they
17 are suspending the use of private warning letters and
18 are going to be reevaluating their use. So, I am
19 interested in participating in that reevaluation.

20 As to public warning letters, I think they serve
21 a very useful purpose, in that the public gets to see
22 -- and other employees -- get to see that there is
23 enforcement going on, and you know what kind of
24 penalties are issued for transgressive behavior.
25 Public warning letters, in my mind, uh, my

2 understanding, are more like stipulations of
3 settlement, so you do not go through the whole
4 hearing process. The person is agreeing that there
5 was a violation and is being publicly censured
6 essentially.

7 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Got it, and... And, I wanted
8 to get to my colleagues as well, but I guess this...
9 This question may be even part of a bigger question
10 here, which is kind of the role of the Conflicts of
11 Interest Board, uhm obviously the presence of it, as
12 you know, are the actions that are taken by that
13 agency have a tremendous effect, uh, may even benefit
14 might be the word to use, to ensuring that there is
15 a, uh, compliance with the law, that there is a good
16 behavior, and that we hold our public service to the
17 highest ethical standard. Uh, but, how do you view
18 the sort of balance between the enforcement side of
19 this, which is to ,you know, hold people accountable
20 when they are breaking the law versus a role in terms
21 being preventive? And where do you see perhaps a
22 change in that balance if you are on the board, or
23 how do you view that more sort of globally, the role
24 between being... doing the preventative side of it
25 and doing the sort of punitive side of it? And, are

2 there places where you think they could be doing one
3 of the other differently?

4 GEORGIA PESTANA: I think that the... The
5 primary goal should be preventative. That is where
6 the balance should weigh more heavily. And I do
7 think that the requirement that we all get training
8 every two years educates all of the public servants.
9 But, I am a huge fan of the Attorney of the Day
10 Service Line, where you can call up and sort of get -
11 - provide the fact pattern and their immediate
12 response on whether, "Oh, this is a problem, don't do
13 it" or "Yeah, you already goofed", and a referral is
14 made forward. But, I think that the advice that you
15 would get helps to prevent some violations, uh,
16 before they occur. So, I think that that is... Uh,
17 and they are all so nice. I mean, it... Have you
18 ever called that line? The people who answer it are
19 like the epitome of nice service... call takers, uh,
20 that I think that expanding that role, and getting...
21 and, having more people aware of it, so that they are
22 using it and avoiding violations in the future is one
23 way to do it. I would want to talk to the staff
24 about their ideas as to other ways to get the
25 information out there. They have, uh, for a short

2 time, I was the Law Departments liaison to the
3 Conflicts of Interest Board, and they had, like, a
4 handy one-page lay person's interpretation so that it
5 was easier to understand what the requirements were.
6 I think doing more of that, because, you know, nobody
7 takes the time... or only lawyers take the time to
8 read the actual law, but putting it in a way that
9 people can understand and distributing that more
10 widely might be another way. But, I definitely think
11 we should be putting more emphasis on the prevention.

12 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Got it.

13 And, uh, we are also joined by Council Member
14 Rafael Salamanca here as well, uh, virtually.

15 I have one more question, it is a question for...
16 from Council Member Brooks - Powers, no relation,
17 but, uh, we do make up a good Powers' caucus, uhm,
18 how do your previously roles, including as
19 corporation counsel, inform your perspective as a
20 potential board member? Can you describe how your
21 experience prepares you to be impartial in evaluating
22 cases?

23 GEORGIA PESTANA: As, uh, in all of my positions
24 at the Law Department, I had to evaluate cases and
25 the facts in front of me and make a determination on

2 whether settlement, litigation, uh, which path to
3 take. And, you develop an impartial eye, and try to
4 sort of see it as the reasonable person on the street
5 is going to see it. I think that that training, uh,
6 will help me to do similar analysis and assessment of
7 matters that come before the board.

8 I also have an understanding of how a lot of the
9 City agencies work, uhm, just having had them as
10 clients, so I think that gives me a little bit an
11 inside track on ,you know, something that I am being
12 told does not quite sound like it is legit. I would
13 have an ability to see that and express it to the
14 other board members -- although they have quite a lot
15 of City experience as well.

16 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Got it, thank you. I am
17 going to now move on to questions from my colleagues.
18 I think we have a question first from Council Member
19 Hudson.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you, Chair Powers.

21 Good morning, Miss Pestana. I want to thank you
22 for your decades of service to the City at the Law
23 Department. The Council was able to work
24 productivity with you and your senior staff since
25

2 your confirmation hearing last July, so we appreciate
3 that.

4 GEORGIA PESTANA: Thank you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: I would like to return to
6 a set of questions we asked you at your last
7 confirmation hearing, because questions related to
8 conflict of interests and judgment are incredibly
9 important for this position.

10 Given the definition of associated persons in the
11 Conflict of Interests Law, do you agree that you were
12 associated with a senior counsel at The Law
13 Department during your time as First Assistant Acting
14 Corporation Counsel and Corporation Counsel?

15 GEORGIA PESTANA: Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: How were you associated
17 with this person?

18 GEORGIA PESTANA: We lived together and owned an
19 apartment together and have a son.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Did you recuse yourself
21 from any matter involving his employment in 2015 when
22 you became First Assistant Corporation Counsel?

23 GEORGIA PESTANA: I recused myself from all
24 matters involving him from 2012 forward when I came
25

2 on to the executive staff to, you know, last week
3 when I left.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay, uhm, and did you
5 seek counsel from COIB at that time?

6 GEORGIA PESTANA: In 2012? No.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Was there written
8 documentation or anything signed by your supervisor
9 acknowledging recusal?

10 GEORGIA PESTANA: No, not then. In July of last
11 year that was, but not then.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay. So, not in 2019 or
13 2021 when you became acting corporate counsel...
14 corporation counsel?

15 GEORGIA PESTANA: Correct.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay. Did you consult The
17 Law Department, uhm, Ethics Council on how best to
18 effectuate your recusal?

19 GEORGIA PESTANA: We talked about it, uh, and
20 with the managing attorney who would be the person
21 who stepped in to my shoes should anything come up
22 at... regarding him.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay.

24 GEORGIA PESTANA: But, I did not do it in
25 writing.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay.

3 Uhm, did you ever supervise or make supervisory
4 decisions regarding the employment of this associated
5 person, including, but not limited to, hiring,
6 firing, promotion, demotion, salary, or discipline?

7 GEORGIA PESTANA: No.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay.

9 Uh, did you ever have meetings about litigation
10 matters he was a part of from 2013 to your recent
11 resignation?

12 GEORGIA PESTANA: Meetings on cases?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Meeting at... About
14 litigation matters he was a part of?

15 GEORGIA PESTANA: Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: And, I think you said
17 already that when you were nominated to become
18 Corporation Counsel last year in 2021, uhm, you did
19 seek a waiver from COIB, is that correct?

20 GEORGIA PESTANA: I did seek a waiver from COIB,
21 and they ultimately decided that I did not need a
22 waiver, because of the recusals structure we had put
23 in place they did recommend that... or directed me
24 to notify The Mayor in writing as to the recusal --
25 get his approval -- and then, uh, give it to the

2 managing attorney who is the person who stepped in to
3 my shoes whenever something came up about his
4 employment.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay, and, so all of that
6 did happen? You did submit the letter... (CROSS-
7 TALK)

8 GEORGIA PESTANA: Yes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: And... Okay, thank you.
10 Uhm, in light of this experience with the
11 Conflicts of Interest Board, would you have handled
12 anything about this potential conflict differently?

13 GEORGIA PESTANA: I would have sought the written
14 advice sooner.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: And, will that impact your
16 perspective as a COIB board member, if you received
17 the Council's advice and consent?

18 GEORGIA PESTANA: I think I would be much... I
19 am much more thoughtful about... about how is this
20 going to be perceived? And, I would take, uh, action
21 more soon... sooner.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay, thank you that
23 concludes my questions.

24 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you, Council Member
25 Hudson.

2 We are now going to go to Council Member Brewer.
3 If others would like to ask question, please let us
4 know.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much, and
6 congratulations on your service at Corp Counsel. My
7 friends there think very highly of you and, uhm,
8 appreciate your service.

9 GEORGIA PESTANA: Thank you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: My question is, the, uhm,
11 City employees, in addition of course to what is done
12 in terms of, you know, thus as elected officials, all
13 City employees also have to be part of the COIB
14 experience. And, I am wondering if there are ways
15 maybe following up on The Chair's questions, are
16 there ways that you think of, either preventive,
17 public information, etcetera, uh, obviously there is
18 training, but it is once a year. I actually know
19 that in some cases, maybe not now, but in the past,
20 it has not been once a year. Are there other ways
21 you can think that employees could get more
22 information so that they do not make the mistakes?

23 GEORGIA PESTANA: I think that getting... They
24 have a fantastic... I am a big fan. They have a
25 really good training unit there that... And, their

2 Twitter account, they have these puzzlers that come
3 out every month, so they try to be in an educating
4 and engaging way. I think we need to do more to get
5 people to pay attention to it, as well as give more
6 ,you know, in this day and age I say paper, but
7 something that they could see and hold on to and
8 refer back to. And, that is the, like, the one-pager
9 that I refer to existed and continues to exist when I
10 was the liaison. But, I do think more publicity for
11 their services and their education, and people...
12 Employees -- public servants -- seem to think of them
13 more as, like, enforcement really just... And, not
14 so much preventative and in an advisory role. I
15 think we need to make that part of their business
16 much more public and accessible.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: How did you discuss and
18 publicize at Law Department what COIB does? Because,
19 obviously you and others, uh, may be would have taken
20 more attention to it in previous, uh, time periods.

21 GEORGIA PESTANA: So, we do have... uhm, one of
22 their trainers comes and does the training, uh, for
23 us. I think it is every two years. Uhm, and also we
24 do some train... We partner with them to do training
25 at other City agencies that are available, because

2 there are other laws that come into play as well.
3 There is... We have a person who does a lot of the
4 COIB... work with the COIB, and she sends out a
5 global email to the entire Law Department when they
6 do their puzzler and issues the challenge of the
7 month to try to get people's attention on that. So,
8 those are the primary ways that I can think offhand
9 that we used at The Law Department to try to get
10 people engaged. But it is, you know, I think it is
11 hard for City employees, who are busy doing their
12 job, to take the moment out, so we need to find
13 something that will catch their attention.

14 [INAUDIBLE 00:25:20] (CROSS-TALK)

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yes, I mean I hope you
16 would do that, because I have say, it is not
17 something... I have seen mistakes made all over the
18 years, because I have been doing this for a long time
19 in terms of public service, and I do not think we
20 have enough information about what is or is not...
21 the rules of the road so to speak in terms of city
22 government. So, I am hoping that if you serve in
23 that role that much more will be done. It is not, in
24 my opinion, a first thought in terms of, "I should

2 call COIB before I do 'x'". It is not the first
3 thing that people do.

4 Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

5 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. Thank you Council
6 Member Brewer. We have also been joined virtually by
7 Council Member Restler, uh, and I think now we are
8 going to go to Council Member Sanchez for questions.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Good morning.

10 GEORGIA PESTANA: Good morning.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: And congratulations on
12 appointment.

13 GEORGIA PESTANA: Thank you.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: So, my question is with
15 respect to number three, on where you say that you
16 would not recuse yourself, uh, in cases that involve
17 your former Law Department colleagues. And, I just
18 wanted to hear a little bit more about your thinking
19 there. Uh, you mentioned that in The Law Department
20 itself, in different units that you were in, you did
21 not necessarily recuse yourself when there were
22 colleagues or people that you knew involved in the
23 cases. So, how do you think about those... You
24 know, we are talking a lot about perception of
25 conflict of interests... (CROSS-TALK)

2 GEORGIA PESTANA: Yeah.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: as well as actual
4 Conflict of Interests, so how do you think about the
5 perception of conflict of interests in those kinds of
6 cases?

7 GEORGIA PESTANA: I think it is important to have
8 both the perception and the actual impartiality.
9 But, I also... It is a small board, five members,
10 so... and, they act by consensus. No individual
11 member is going... vote is going to change the
12 outcome necessarily unless it is a close one.

13 Just because I know someone, does not mean that I
14 should recuse myself. I know a lot of people as I am
15 sure you all do. But, I would have to look at the
16 particular facts. Is it something that I was
17 involved in when I was at The Law Department, or if
18 it is somebody that I was particularly close to, I
19 think that I would need to recuse myself. Because,
20 no matter what, the perception will be there. But,
21 if it is just someone who I occasionally interacted
22 with, and I had no knowledge of the underlying facts,
23 I do not think it would be necessary just because
24 they are a Law Department employee or a City
25 employee. I had clients in all of the agencies, and

2 there might be somebody that I worked with closely at
3 an agency; I would similarly have to take a step back
4 and say, "How is this going to look?" and recuse
5 myself then. But, I do not think it should be
6 automatic. I think there has to be some analysis as
7 to what the relationship is and the underlying facts.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you, and good to
9 see you again.

10 GEORGIA PESTANA: Good to see you, too.

11 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. Do we have
12 other... Any other folks signed up for questions?
13 No? Okay.

14 Well, congratulations on your nomination. Thank
15 you for answering those questions.

16 And, seeing none, we will move on to our next
17 candidate.

18 GEORGIA PESTANA: Okay, thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you so much.

20 Uh, so we are going to move on to our next
21 candidate. We are first going to swear you in. We
22 can do a quick swearing in, and we will have...
23 Billy, the Public Advocate, would like to make a
24 brief opening, and then we will turn to you to make
25 an opening statement as well.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Can you please raise your
3 right hand?

4 Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth,
5 and nothing but the truth... (CROSS-TALK)

6 IFEOMA IKE: I do... (CROSS-TALK)

7 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Oh, uh, you know, sorry, I
8 apologize. I think we have Council Member Restler,
9 here who had one more question for Miss Pestana. I
10 am sorry to jump in late, but we will come back
11 [INAUDIBLE 00:28:56]

12 GEORGIA PESTANA: Hello?

13 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: What? Oh, I think we lost
14 him. So, we will, uh... (CROSS-TALK)

15 GEORGIA PESTANA: I will be here if he comes
16 back... (CROSS-TALK)

17 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: And, I will... I am sure you
18 are really disappointed... (CROSS-TALK)

19 GEORGIA PESTANA: I... (CROSS-TALK)

20 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Uh, just kidding, just
21 kidding... (CROSS-TALK)

22 GEORGIA PESTANA: I have not talked to him in a
23 long time... (CROSS-TALK)

24 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Uh, if he comes back we
25 will... we will have him up... (CROSS-TALK)

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2 GEORGIA PESTANA: Okay, I will be here...

3 (CROSS-TALK)

4 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: But, anyway, we will... We
5 will turn back to our next candidate.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you swear to tell the
7 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

8 IFEOMA IKE: I do.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

10 IFEOMA IKE: You're welcome.

11 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Great, thank you. Before we
12 turn for your opening statement, we will add... We
13 will invite the Public Advocate, Jumaane Williams, to
14 make an opening statement here as well.

15 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you so much, Mr.
16 Chair.

17 Uh, as you mentioned, my name is Jumaane
18 Williams, Public Advocate for the City of New Yorker.
19 I want to thank Speaker Adams, Chair Keith Powers,
20 and the members of the committee for holding this
21 hearing to consider the appointment of Ifeoma Ike,
22 Attorney at Law, to New York City's Conflicts of
23 Interest Board.

24 I would like to congratulate both of you on your
25 nominations.

2 I respectfully request that the members of this
3 committee vote to affirm the appointment of Miss Ike
4 to the board. This is the first appointment ever by
5 a Public Advocate to the Conflicts of Interest Board,
6 and as a result of the 2019 Charter revision that
7 granted The Comptroller and the Public Advocate an
8 appointment each, I believe in an express reason to
9 try to provide much needed diversity of opinion on
10 the board.

11 It is with pride that I nominated Miss Ike for
12 her distinguished career in government and in the
13 private sector. Miss Ike has a Bachelor's degree in
14 Communications, a Master's in Communications and
15 Research and Theory; Miss Ike received her Juris
16 Doctorate from CUNY Law School and then received her
17 LL.M Masters of Law in Litigation and Dispute
18 Resolution at George Washington University of Law.
19 Miss Ike was a Counsel Fellow to the Committee of the
20 Judiciary in the United States Congress; she served
21 as counsel to "Obama for America", and worked in
22 creating multi-state legislative reforms to stop the
23 wrongful incarceration of individuals.

24 Miss Ike served as Deputy Director for the New
25 York City Young Men's Initiative at the office of The

2 Mayor; she was the co-founder and the partner of the
3 Think Tank Think Rubix

4 Miss Ike is currently a partner at Pink Cornrows,
5 and is an Adjunct Assistant Professor at CUNY's
6 Lehman College teaching Political Science and
7 African-American Studies.

8 As an attorney, Miss Ike knows the letter of the
9 law and the spirit of the law. She will be
10 forthright and resolute in her findings.

11 Having been a member of this body for, uh, either
12 as a member or an ex officio, I guess going on 12
13 years now, having been to many of these hearings, uh,
14 and hearing questions on possible conflicts, which I
15 have been involved in, uh, with questioning folks,
16 and as we have heard and probably will hear, uh, the
17 issues for these nominations, uh, my hope is that the
18 board will ask the questions, hear the answers, and
19 as we have usually done in the past, if those answers
20 are satisfactory, move forward with approving the
21 nominations.

22 Once again, thank you for the opportunity to
23 address to everyone today.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. Thank you for
3 that opening statement, and thank you for joining us
4 here today as well, Mr. Public Advocate.

5 Uh, we will now go to Miss... Can I get... Ike
6 is the correct pronunciation? We will go to Miss Ike
7 for her opening statement.

8 IFEOMA IKE: Thank you

9 And, first let me start by apologizing to
10 everyone here for the lateness, and I want to thank,
11 I think he made it back, my brother was able to drive
12 my car to the parking garage, so that accident
13 delayed me, so thank you all for your patience. I
14 also want to say congratulations to my fellow
15 nominee.

16 So, good morning, uh, Madam Speaker Adams,
17 council members of The Rules Committee, and New York
18 City council members, and this City that I call home.

19 My dad and I are different in so many ways, uh,
20 he is a conservative who was raised in a village in
21 Nigeria and migrated here to pursue the American
22 dream; I am a student of movements and a dreamer
23 raised in the poor streets of Trenton, New Jersey,
24 who fights every day to make sure the American dream
25 is real for everyone. Despite our differences, it

2 was dad who made me love ethics. Most people know
3 that one has to pass the bar before one becomes an
4 attorney, but there is another exam called MPRE,
5 which focuses purely on legal ethic. Like most of my
6 peers, I took the exam while I was still law school,
7 and when I did not pass the first time, by less than
8 10 points, my dad gave me some advice that frames my
9 thoughts for today, "Fall in love with ethics, not be
10 perfect, but to be better."

11 Today, I am sitting before you, because in 2019,
12 voters decided that we can improve how ethics
13 functions in our City.

14 As non-mayoral nominee, I have many of the
15 traditional qualifications of past COIB board
16 members. I am an attorney who has experience
17 interpreting the law, providing legal guidance, and
18 using precedent and standing decisions to determine
19 outcomes. But, what many may not know, is that being
20 a lawyer is actually not a requirement to serve on
21 COIB, and that is important, because the relevant
22 work experience that made me say yes to this
23 nomination is a former City employee, as the former
24 Deputy Executive Director for the New York City Young
25 Men's Initiative, which I actually advocated to be

2 changed to the Young People's Initiative -- but that
3 is a separate conversation. If I can be honest, I
4 had relatively little experience with COIB while
5 serving for the City. That is not to say they were
6 not valuable or that there were not resources. COIB
7 has helpful tools, but I am unsure if the majority of
8 us engage with COIB outside of our mandatory
9 onboarding process and the few mandatory trainings.
10 In the few times I heard fellow employees discuss
11 COIB, it was through a lens of either punitive
12 measures or in the context of The Mayor. Which is
13 why I was surprised that one of the missions of COIB
14 was to support the professional development and
15 education of employees within the city to better
16 understand ethics -- as my dad would say, "Not be
17 perfect, but to be better."

18 So, I come in to this hearing, as both a former
19 public servant and a current CEO of a social impact
20 and equity team, which advises and trains leaders in
21 organizations to use data and narratives to improve
22 environment so that equity is real for especially
23 those who bear the brunt of unjust and unequal
24 systems.

2 I am excited to engage with all today about the
3 ways COIB can support each City employee better
4 understand the rules, get support when needed, and
5 see this as a space for both accountability and an
6 opportunity to improve. There is a way to ensure
7 equity is at the core of how we evaluate each
8 decision, that each board member is independent from
9 any influence, and that we support the hardworking
10 COIB staff and legal team who currently are tasked
11 with training and equipping almost 400,000 City
12 employees. I look forward to learning more through
13 this conversation about how that is achieved and
14 hopefully sharing my expertise in this area as well.

15 Thank you

16 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you, I am going to go
17 through a few questions, uh, first, and then I will
18 turn it over to my colleagues to, uh, dive in as
19 well.

20 Uhm, a couple of questions just sort of on the
21 board and some of similar questions I had asked of
22 our other nominee here as well, and I should mention,
23 congratulations on your nomination here today.

24 IFEOMA IKE: Thank you.
25

2 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Uh, can you tell us, what
3 would you would do as a member of the board to ensure
4 more equity in the application of the Conflicts of
5 Interest Law to non-mayoral City elected officials
6 and employees?

7 IFEOMA IKE: Sure, I mean, even as I am sure we
8 will touch on today, I would like to say that, as an
9 employee I knew all of the rules; I did not.

10 I think that it is important that when we are
11 engaging as COIB and as a former City employee, I
12 come in with an experience of what it means to
13 actually go through doing great work for the City,
14 but also not necessarily knowing all of the rules,
15 uhm, that impact your employment, and even impact
16 when you leave City service.

17 In general some of the things that run through my
18 mind when it comes to, uhm, the City... the
19 public... the composition of our public servants,
20 uh, in this City, is that in a city that is a
21 majority of people of color, that is also reelected
22 in our, uh, the composition of those who serve for
23 this City. Uh, that also means that women of color
24 are also, uhm, working and are also in many ways in
25 spaces disproportionality where they are not in

2 supervisory roles, in spaces of power, uhm, and City
3 employee that I have met, that has been a part of a
4 marginalized community wants to make sure that they
5 do not get in trouble. I think it is important when
6 we are looking at actions and decisions that come
7 before us that we are of course looking at the rule
8 of law, but also recognizing that context is
9 important as to how we determine what the outcome of
10 the consequence should be, uhm, and also that we do
11 not just rest at the decision, but also think about
12 what are some of the education implications that
13 could support COIB as an agency and to the extent
14 that we would need to -- if appointed -- we would
15 need to come before the City Council to really
16 discuss what are some tools that could be better
17 either tweaked or some tools that could be enhanced
18 so that some of these issues could be prevented.
19 That is actually, uhm, what I think what is the
20 essence of the expansion -- of the 2019 Charter. So,
21 that is in part, uhm, what I think I would be laser
22 focused on to make sure that equity, as it relates to
23 people of color, uh, and those serve in the City and
24 are trying to, you know, make this city better every
25 day, that we do bring in the context of "What did

2 they actually know?" prior to getting in, and where
3 are the opportunities that they could have learned
4 more about ethics while they are working?

5 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Got it. Uh, a couple more
6 questions...

7 IFEOMA IKE: Sure.

8 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: And, then I will hand it over
9 to some colleagues.

10 Do you believe the board should have lie
11 discretion in terminating a fine, or should potential
12 fines be laid out in an established schedule form,
13 which the board would utilize as it is doing its
14 decision making on how to penalize someone for a
15 violation?

16 IFEOMA IKE: I think this is an interesting
17 question, because there is a part of this that I know
18 I would need to learn more about how this space
19 works. Uh, the issue that I have with scheduled...
20 Or the concern that I would like to speak with other
21 board members around scheduled fine determinations,
22 uh, is whether or not blanket fines are equitably
23 applied and treated to all City employees based on
24 their circumstance or their situation. Uhm, I do not
25 want to put out --this is for academic purposes-- I

2 want to put that out for the record, but when I think
3 of two individuals that may be confronting a \$5,000
4 fine, as I board member, I am going to want to know
5 how much do they make for the year? Is this \$5,000
6 not only something that could impact their
7 livelihood, but is this \$5,000, uh, this blanket
8 \$5,000, is that actually equitable depending on the
9 context of that individual's employment, their title,
10 their seniority, how much they knew, how long they
11 have been office? So, there are things that I would
12 want to know around who the individual is that has
13 allegedly violated. I think that warrants a
14 discussion, uhm, and I think that, as this stage, as
15 someone who has not served on COIB, it would be
16 helpful for us to know how they applicant of these
17 fines are decided as is as it currently stands. But,
18 I do think that this is a conversation that requires
19 more insight, more research, and more testimony; at
20 this stage, I do not think that I am in a position to
21 say one of the other.

22 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Okay. Uhm, would it be, uh,
23 just in your opinion, once you do make it to the
24 board as well... (CROSS-TALK)

25 IFEOMA IKE: Sure.

2 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Uhm, these are questions
3 that, uh, actually were submitted to me from the, uh,
4 by Council Member Selvena Brooks-Powers, uh, has
5 wanted to ask since she is not here to ask questions.
6 I think she is chairing her own committee here today.

7 Uh, one of them is, in response to your pre-
8 hearing questions, you mentioned using all tools
9 available to create avenues to actualize equity. I
10 have think you have touched on this a little bit in
11 your... (CROSS-TALK)

12 IFEOMA IKE: Sure.

13 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: previous answers. Can you
14 expand on that? How do you envision your role on
15 COIB as advancing equity?

16 IFEOMA IKE: So, when I say all tools, I think the
17 main thing is, like, there is no one -- for me -- I
18 think that there is definitely... I am definitely
19 big on pooling experiences that I have had obviously
20 as a former City employee -- and, even a former City
21 employee who also had to manage other team members.
22 So, I think that it is really important in this
23 space, since it has been five... four - almost five
24 years to really think and reflect back as to not only
25 what are they ways that I could have had more tools

2 to actually be able to do my job better, but what are
3 the ways that I also could have supported my team
4 members and those that look up to me to have that
5 information, since as it was mentioned earlier, we
6 are all working really fast; everybody is doing their
7 job? Trainings and set times to make it to 250
8 Broadway or to wherever you need to get to, may not
9 be convenient for everyone. Uhm, even the phone
10 service, which is a great support, depending on what
11 your title is, that you may not necessarily... You
12 may not actually have that time to actually have that
13 down time to make those calls. So, that is one
14 aspect that I think would be helpful, and that is in
15 some ways pretty obvious, because I used to work
16 here. Uh, but I also think that when it comes to the
17 interpretation of the law, that I in some ways I am a
18 little bit of a nerd if you will about the how...
19 Are there possibly different interpretations of
20 something that has traditionally been applied
21 throughout the City? So, for example, I know one of
22 the questions that you all were interested in has to
23 do with whether or not we would, uhm, need to give
24 The Mayor or any agency head a heads up, if you will,
25 prior to a consultation prior to actually reaching

2 out to any individual or alleged individual that may
3 have done wrongdoing. The first clause of that part
4 in the Charter, actually says, "If the board
5 determines", and I think that is a very interesting
6 way to start a clause, because anything that comes
7 after that, you can interpret it the way that
8 precedent has shown with opinions, which typically as
9 it has been followed, the board has given
10 consultation to the mayor or agency heads about any
11 violations that have occurred. But, there is another
12 way of interpreting it, which is "if the board
13 determines". So, it is not actually written. There
14 is an argument that it is not actually in the law
15 that you have to, uh, consult with the mayor or an
16 agency head. So, I think that having a diverse way
17 of looking at the interpretation of the law, like
18 other bodies of collaborative spaces from appellate
19 courts to even the Supreme Court, is actually helpful
20 in this space. I think it is important for all of us
21 to look at it as broadly as possible to see if our
22 interpretations would thus impact how we would
23 actually create not only discretion around fines or
24 "is there a violation?" but then, also, what are the
25 ways we can support COIB as an agency to have

2 educational tools about what the meaning of the law
3 is?

4 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Got it, thank you for that.

5 Uh, I am going to now go to colleagues who I
6 think have questions.

7 We are going to start with Council Member
8 Sanchez.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Good morning, Miss Ike,
10 how are you doing?

11 IFEOMA IKE: Good morning.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Good, nice to meet you...

13 IFEOMA IKE: I am well, thank you. Nice to meet
14 you.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: I first just want to
16 thank you for your extensive service to the City ,
17 during your time working for The Young Men's
18 Initiative, and all of the critical racial equity
19 work that you have done in your impressive career
20 from your advocacy on The Hill, on Trayvon Martin's
21 case, uh, to working in The Bronx and Lehman College,
22 which is very close to where I grew up, and so I want
23 to just appreciate that, and you should be commended
24 for your dedication to service and for this important
25 work.

2 So, I want to focus on a potential conflict of
3 interest that you may have had in seeking a contract
4 with the City during your time in The Mayor's Office,
5 uh, on behalf of a for-profit company that you co-
6 founded. And, I view this topic as particularly
7 important since you have been nominated for the
8 Conflicts of Interest Board.

9 Your judgment is going to be, as all
10 Commissioners, is going to be really important, and
11 again, as I said previously, both the perceived
12 conflict of interests...

13 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: as well as actual
15 conflict of interests. Uh, so just starting with
16 some questions, is it true that you worked in the
17 Office of the Mayor from February 18th, 2015 through
18 October 20, 2017?

19 IFEOMA IKE: That is true. That is correct.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay, thank you.

21 On your resume, you indicate that you became a
22 co-founder of a for-profit company called Think Rubix
23 in August of 2017. Is that right?

24 IFEOMA IKE: I was co-founder... So, in my...
25 Yes, that is correct.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Mm-hmm?

3 IFEOMA IKE: Uh, it is also important to note that
4 while I was in the City, just a caveat on the for-
5 profit, that we were basically a baby start-up during
6 that time. So, that for-profit... It is a for-
7 profit consultancy, but as far as "was profit coming
8 in during that time?" I think that that is the
9 discrepancy. I was not working on any projects
10 during that time when Think Rubix was in its early
11 infancy.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay, so, there was no
13 income at Think Rubix at the time?

14 IFEOMA IKE: They had... They had projects, but I
15 was not... I don't know if I am explaining it
16 correctly, but I was not making... I was not working
17 on any contracts at that time... (CROSS-TALK)

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay. Got it.

19 IFEOMA IKE: Right.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: So, that makes sense.

21 So, then, but so you became a co-founder of Think
22 Rubix while working for The Mayor's Office, though?
23 That is true to say? (CROSS-TALK)

24 IFEOMA IKE: That is true.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay.

2 In your responses to the... The prehearing
3 questions, you indicated that, "Upon leaving City
4 Hall, I was asked if I could design an social impact
5 strategy connecting Black communities in New York
6 City to mental health support systems and mental
7 health first aid training. I was unsure if I could,
8 given the one year rule, but was cleared because it
9 was through a different agency. I do not remember
10 the name of the person who cleared my ability to work
11 in this project." That addresses what you did at the
12 conclusion of your City service in October 2017, but
13 did you seek a waiver from the Conflicts of Interest
14 Board to become a co-founder of Think Rubix, uh, from
15 that inception --from August 2017?

16 IFEOMA IKE: For Think Rubix, I did not.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay. And, just to
18 clarify, it... When you say that you were asked, uhm,
19 you were asked to design a social impact strategy,
20 you are saying that Think Rubix asked you to design
21 that strategy?

22 IFEOMA IKE: So, I am saying that I was... That
23 Think Rubix was asked to design a strategy...

24 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay.

2 IFEOMA IKE: Uhm, and so working... After...

3 While working at the City, as everyone knows, the
4 prior administration, mental health was a major part
5 of their... of their platform, and so, while working
6 at the City, there were various aspects of, "How do
7 we reach communities equitably?" that were well in
8 line with what I had to do within the City. After I
9 had already left the City. I was approached, and I
10 really wish I could remember by who, but I was
11 approached to support helping, "How do we get more
12 Black communities?" and "How do we get more
13 organizations to be connected to mental health?" Uh,
14 it actually did not come... The conversation about
15 whether, you know, there would be a contract or not
16 did not occur while I was working for the City.

17 So, I just wanted to mention that it was well in
18 line with my work while I was at the City to focus on
19 mental health issues as it relates to Black and Brown
20 communities, uh, as is. So, I don't know if that was
21 clear in what I wrote.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay, okay, that makes
23 sense.

24 Okay, so, when you say... And, sorry, maybe I am
25 just dense, uh... (CROSS-TALK)

2 IFEOMA IKE: No, no, that's a lot... (CROSS-TALK)

3 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: But, the... In terms of
4 who asked you to create that social impact strategy,
5 it was something that you did as part of your work in
6 The Young Men's Initiative, or it was something that
7 came to you through Think Rubix?

8 IFEOMA IKE: So, the... I ended up managing it
9 through Think Rubix It came through Think Rubix, but
10 I was... I... My team was aware that because I
11 worked at the City, that I would have informant as
12 to, like, what exactly is it that we are working on?
13 So, I don't... What I think is important is that,
14 and excuse me as I am having thoughts, because I am
15 in this position of what it means for COIB, right?
16 Like in this position, I think that the real honest
17 truth is that time, we were just excited to get Black
18 people connected to... (CROSS-TALK)

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Mm-hmm?

20 IFEOMA IKE: mental health services.

21 Currently, what I am recognizing is that while
22 very innocent in how we do that work, it is
23 problematic, because it gives the appearance of some
24 type of wrongdoing, or it gives an appearance of some
25 type of "ignoring the law", uh, and I think that at

2 that time, I was not necessarily as clear about what
3 the... what could or could not be done. And, even
4 within the last couple of days, which has been
5 helpful, there has been more information that is even
6 coming from my team as to, like, what that
7 contracting process was, because I was not the one
8 that led contracting for Think Rubix So, I am
9 answering questions the best that I can... (CROSS-
10 TALK)

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Mm-hmm.

12 IFEOMA IKE: but I also then was not the one that
13 was managing contracts for Think Rubix

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Got it. Got it, that...
15 That makes sense.

16 Uhm, and then just to clarify, you... You said
17 that you were unsure if you could, because of the one
18 year rule, uh, but that you were cleared. So, can
19 you describe... Because, it does sound like you
20 spoke to someone... (CROSS-TALK)

21 IFEOMA IKE: Yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Uhm, and... And, you...
23 You received guidance, you know, to kind of keep on
24 going. So, who did you speak to? Do you remember

2 who that was? Did you have anything in writing about
3 that?

4 IFEOMA IKE: I don't and I don't. One of the
5 things that I did for diligence purposes just try to,
6 like, go through my own emails, right? Uhm, and the
7 last email, uh, the email that most City employees
8 have with their personal email is when you are
9 leaving. Right? So, I was able to trace back my
10 last email, *Hey, I'm leaving, this is my personal*
11 *email*. I even mentioned what projects I would be
12 working on that they were interested in --
13 Charlottesville, a project with Lawyers Committee--
14 so, at no point in time was there any, like, vision
15 of a contract that I would be working on as it
16 related to mental health.

17 Post working for the City, uhm, there were...
18 And, just to give a sense of that this contract...
19 what the scope of this engagement was, the scope of
20 the engagement was to connect Black people to mental
21 health via what would be considered like historically
22 Black institutions and organizations of which I am a
23 member of many of these organizations.

24 Uhm, so, work that I was doing afterwards was at
25 that time, mistake of law is not a defense, but at

2 that time, I thought of it that I am here operating
3 as a member of one of these organizations to support
4 ensuring that our communities are getting what they
5 need, that I was no longer acting in my capacity as
6 City government employee or as even somebody who is
7 in violation of the one year rule.

8 Uh, I do recall... I do not know who, but I do
9 recall just raising out of curiosity, like, am I
10 going to be in any type of... Is this going to be
11 problematic, or am I going to be in any type of
12 trouble for, uhm, supporting with connecting
13 organizations that I am connected to -- to get to
14 know more information? And, I was assured that I was
15 not. Uh, and so I think part of the reason... And
16 that is not in writing, I think that may have just
17 even been a conversation. What I was able to do with
18 my former team, because I am not at Think Rubix
19 anymore, was they were able to trace back their
20 earliest emails as it related to anything as it had
21 to do with the City. And the earliest emails for
22 them were in 2018. So, this is also where like, it
23 is, uh, frustrating, because it is clear that I was
24 definitely in support of making sure that our
25 communities were receiving what they needed after I

2 left City Hall. But, as far as their emails and
3 email chains and what they have been able to trace,
4 their earliest record is in 2018. So, one of the
5 things that I wanted to make sure is especially since
6 all of this is on the record, is to be able to
7 provide the council with, like, "Let me get you all
8 those documents," because I think that would be
9 helpful to really determine the difference between
10 doing work that you think is good social impact work
11 for the City... (CROSS-TALK)

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Mm-hmm

13 IFEOMA IKE: versus, like, a contract for the
14 City.

15 Uh, but, again, because I... I was not the
16 managing partner for the team, or I was not the one
17 doing the contracting for the team. I had to wait
18 for that managing partner to also check their data
19 base.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Yeah, got it.

21 IFEOMA IKE: So, yeah.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Uhm, no, and I want to...
23 I want to just thank you for... for laying that out
24 and clarifying that, because... (CROSS-TALK)

25 IFEOMA IKE: Yes.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: You know, I can totally
3 relate to wanting to, you know, jump on something and
4 move quickly to do something that might serve the
5 community. Uhm, but you know, then being, uhm, you
6 know, potentially tripping wires.

7 So I want to... I want to shift gears a little
8 bit, you know, I have been asking questions about
9 sort of like the appearance of... (CROSS-TALK)

10 IFEOMA IKE: Sure.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: conflict of interests.
12 And, these are... These are a little bit more fact
13 based question.

14 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: So, uhm, when were you a
16 staffer in The Mayor's Office proper...

17 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: So, in that time between
19 August 2017 and onward when you were still in The
20 Mayor's Office, were you actively trying to help
21 them, uh, to find the DOHMH contract... To obtain
22 the DOHMH contract?

23 IFEOMA IKE: No. There was not an even a
24 discussion about a DOHMH contract.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay.

2 So, I understand, and we understand from one of
3 the co-founders at Think Rubix that you did help to
4 draft, uh, the proposal to the City. Is that not
5 accurate?

6 IFEOMA IKE: Uhm, I have... I have, uhm, here,
7 and I just want to make sure, because I actually just
8 found out. Uhm, I have here actually the spots from
9 him.

10 So... So, I believe the... What he... What he
11 had shared, and correct me I am wrong, uhm, but
12 Tristen Wilkerson, who is the managing partner, had
13 shared that I had provided communication insight as
14 to what it is that we would be doing for this
15 contact. So, he led the contract... He was the one
16 was facilitating the contact with the City. Uhm,
17 but, when I was... When it was asked as to what
18 would be the activities that we would be doing, I was
19 definitely supportive of, like, these are the
20 activities that we would be engaging in.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay, okay, got it. Uhm,
22 that... That makes a lot of sense.

23 And, I have to ask, so did you work... Did you
24 ever have these conversations with Tristen, uh,

2 Wilkerson? Did you ever them at work or from your...
3 your computer, uh, work... work from your computer?

4 IFEOMA IKE: While working at the City?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Mm-hmm

6 IFEOMA IKE: No.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Good.

8 Uhm, did you ever work on the proposal during
9 time when you were on the clock?

10 IFEOMA IKE: No.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay.

12 Uhm, ultimately Think Rubix did obtain a contract
13 for \$20,000, uh, their first contract, correct?

14 IFEOMA IKE: Uh, I believe it is... it is for
15 \$20,000.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay, and, your first
17 date... Sorry, your last day at City Hall, was
18 October 20, 2017?

19 IFEOMA IKE: Correct.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: And, do you recall the
21 first day of the contract? Was it November 1, 2017?

22 IFEOMA IKE: The first day of... And, this is why
23 I would actually really want more time to submit
24 information... The first day of... that is on the
25 document that was just shared with me, actually this

2 morning, it is my first time seeing that document,
3 and it is dated November 1, 2017.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay.

5 IFEOMA IKE: That email, which Tristen also shared
6 with me with that document was emailed to Tristen in
7 2018. And, that is where... As the non-contracting
8 person, that is where I personally would like to have
9 more time to make sure you all have that information
10 as well. Uhm, it looks like there... It looks the
11 dates are not consistent with when... with when the
12 work was actually done. But, the... Tristen did
13 verify through his emails that the executed
14 contract... that that contract that was dated
15 November 1st, was actually not signed until June
16 2018.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Got it. June 2018?

18 IFEOMA IKE: Correct. That is when he received an
19 email saying that this is the contract.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Got it. Did you, uh,
21 benefit financially from the \$20,000 contract?

22 IFEOMA IKE: I did not. I did not benefit. That
23 was not for me.

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay. And, then, there
3 were two later contracts that Think Rubix was
4 awarded, right? Each in the amount of \$30,000?

5 IFEOMA IKE: Uh, in 2018, yes... (CROSS-TALK)

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: In 2018? Okay. Well, I
7 am going to... I am going to stop there. Uhm, I
8 just want to thank you, because it is really
9 important, and as you have more information on the
10 timeline, that would be helpful for us to understand
11 as well, because again we, you know, with the
12 Conflicts of Interest Board... (CROSS-TALK)

13 IFEOMA IKE: Absolutely... (CROSS-TALK)

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: if it were any other
15 board, you know, that there would be a different line
16 of questioning and consideration. But, with the
17 Conflicts of Interest Board in particular, this is an
18 example of the kind of thing that is going to come
19 before you. Right? So... (CROSS-TALK)

20 IFEOMA IKE: Absolutely.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: I just... I just want to
22 thank you for, you know, for answering all of these
23 questions, and again for... for your history in
24 doing this work.

25 IFEOMA IKE: Thank you.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Mm-hmm

3 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. I just... Before
4 I hand it over to colleagues, just have a couple of
5 follow up questions.

6 The first is, uhm, this is a contact with the
7 Department of Health, am I correct?

8 IFEOMA IKE: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Correct? And, I think as...
10 If I heard correctly, this was a, uh, the department
11 had reached out to the business the... to ask them
12 to help assist with, uh, the services they contracted
13 for? Is that correct? You.... Uh... Uh, rather...

14 (CROSS-TALK)

15 IFEOMA IKE: That's... (CROSS-TALK)

16 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: That versus, the other way
17 around... Versus seeking out a... (CROSS-TALK)

18 IFEOMA IKE: Oh, correct.

19 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: opportunity?

20 IFEOMA IKE: That is correct.

21 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Okay. Uh, I... I think I
22 heard, uh, the answer already, but could... Who...
23 Who is the individual or the folks, uh, team perhaps
24 even at the Department of Health that did... reached
25 out?

2 IFEOMA IKE: So, I do not... As... As I stated
3 for the record, I do not remember the person -- the
4 individual person that I... I just do not remember
5 at this stage, because it was a conversation. But,
6 the team that we actually were working with, uhm, was
7 under, uh, mostly the team that is... I believe it
8 is still called The Center for Health Equity. At
9 that time, it was under the leadership of Dr. Lisa
10 Maybank (sp?). And, so we... We were very sure to
11 make sure that we kept our correspondence and our
12 work with her and her team. Uhm, again, it is... It
13 is... This is more embarrassing than anything,
14 because I actually thought as a former City Hall
15 employee, that I had enough information to make sure
16 I was not working with my former agency, which was
17 The Mayor's Office. So, as subcontractors, we worked
18 just with Dr. Maybank's (sp?) team.

19 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Got it. I... I think I am
20 going to ask you... And, I think just in transition
21 type of timing aspect of which is obviously
22 important, and, uh...

23 IFEOMA IKE: Sure.

24 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: And, there is the perception
25 issue, but I think then the other side of that is,

2 how does the contract come to be and who was sort of
3 involved in that.

4 And, I guess my last question would be, uhm, what
5 is the contact? Is it... It was not an RFP or a
6 bid? It was a...

7 IFEOMA IKE: No, I think, uh, it is, uhm, there
8 are like a... I would... I do not want to be messed
9 up on the term, but I think there are like non-
10 competitive contracts that are... The amount range
11 do not... do not reach the... (CROSS-TALK)

12 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: It is like \$20,000 maybe
13 \$40,000 now... (CROSS-TALK)

14 IFEOMA IKE: So, right... (CROSS-TALK)

15 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: But, it was \$20,000...
16 (CROSS-TALK)

17 IFEOMA IKE: To like... An RFP, correct...
18 (CROSS-TALK)

19 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: In terms of threshold to...
20 Before it was... Okay. So, thank you.

21 Uhm, we have other questions from folks?

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member [INAUDIBLE
23 01:02:53]

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Okay, we will go to Council
3 Member Brewer. Council member Hudson [INAUDIBLE
4 01:02:54] thanks.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much for
6 your service. Uhm, I thought it was interesting when
7 you said, uh, you know, when you were speaking,
8 understandably, that you had little experience with
9 the COIB while serving with the City. So, when you
10 were in The Mayor's Office, did they give, uh, the
11 kind of information that we have in terms of training
12 with COIB or... or not? Maybe not. I don't know, I
13 am asking.

14 IFEOMA IKE: I... I do remember that was in the
15 first early part of our onboarding. So, I think
16 within the first 60 days we have, uhm mandatory COIB
17 training. Uhm, I honestly shared that I had not had
18 any other type of mayor's office led ,you know, COIB
19 training, "You should do this or you should do that,"
20 I do not recall that.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so you had light
22 maybe one training when you were there? (CROSS-TALK)

23 IFEOMA IKE: When I first came on.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: When you first came on?
25 Okay.

2 The question I have is, uhm, when you were even
3 approached or whether you did or did not have any
4 contact regarding this company, did it occur to you,
5 maybe from the training or at any point to say, "I
6 need to check with COIB... (CROSS-TALK)

7 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: The reason I ask is, I
9 teach at Hunter College and I... The first thing I
10 did, I don't know how many years ago, called COIB.
11 It's like, I have to call COIB... (CROSS-TALK)

12 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Is that something that
14 occurred to you, or did not?

15 IFEOMA IKE: Uhm, I... It did occur to me to
16 inquire about, "Is there something wrong?" Where I do
17 not think I did the right thing, was I should have
18 been to go to COIB. I think I just spoke to
19 individuals that I thought knew more information than
20 me... (CROSS-TALK)

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: They never do.

22 IFEOMA IKE: And, they... And, they were the ones
23 that assured me that, uh, that I... that I was fine.
24 That is just the honest truth.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, because that is what
3 the problem is today. It seems to me... (CROSS-
4 TALK)

5 IFEOMA IKE: Sure.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Heavily. So, I... During
7 the... I am trying to understand, during the, uhm,
8 the time period, I know there is a Charter section
9 that says, "No regular employee shall have an
10 interest... (CROSS-TALK)

11 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: in a firm which such
13 regular employee knows is engaged in publicly traded,
14 as defined by rule of the board."

15 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And the... You know, the
17 question is, because you were here in the City
18 employee from February 2015 through October 2017.
19 And, I... What you are saying is that, uhm, do you
20 agree that becoming a co-founder of Think Rubix in
21 August of 2017, you had a business interest in the
22 firm? Because, obviously you were still, according to
23 you, part of the City employee at that time.

24 IFEOMA IKE: Yes, I would... I would agree that
25 that is correct.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. And, so, uhm, but
3 you are saying, according to the previous response,
4 that you did not make any money off of it at that
5 point, but there was a business interest?

6 IFEOMA IKE: Correct, because in reading the full,
7 uhm, breakdown of.... of the law, just being
8 represented in some type of, you know, stakeholder-
9 ship of Think Rubix, regardless of whether I
10 financially gained anything or not, is being a part
11 of an entity outside of my City employee
12 employment... (CROSS-TALK)

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, but... And, that
14 makes sense, and I think what you are also saying is
15 you were not paid by the company while you were a
16 City employee?

17 IFEOMA IKE: Correct.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's correct? Ct

19 IFEOMA IKE: You said you were... I was not?
20 That's... Is that... (CROSS-TALK)

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Correct, not, is what you
22 said to the... (CROSS-TALK)

23 IFEOMA IKE: Correct, correct... (CROSS-TALK)

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Council Member Sanchez.

2 Uhm, the other question is on what... Do you...
3 Did you help, because we do want more people of color
4 to be part of mental health services, there is no
5 question about that.

6 IFEOMA IKE: Right.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: There are groups that do
8 it, obviously.... Maybe yours is excellent, but did
9 you help draft the proposal for that contract during
10 your time when you were a service of the City of New
11 York?

12 IFEOMA IKE: No.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Uhm, and do you,
14 uhm, I think one of the challenges is that this is a
15 position that you have been nominated for at the
16 Conflicts of Interest Board...

17 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And, so, we are... We
19 want to make sure that nobody who is on that board
20 has a previous conflict of interest, only because
21 City employees are constantly being told that they
22 have a conflict of interest. Right? It is a... It
23 is... It is a very fine line, and I think many City
24 employees, as we all know, uh, are challenged by the
25 Conflicts of Interest Board, afraid of it, as we

2 heard earlier, we need more prevention, less
3 penalizing -- all of that. So, it is... That is why
4 I think you are getting all of these questions.

5 IFEOMA IKE: Can I... Can I respond to that
6 [INAUDIBLE 01:07:28]... (CROSS-TALK)

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Sure, please.

8 IFEOMA IKE: I actually do not have a problem with
9 the questions. And, I do not have a problem with
10 even talking through how that would be problematic to
11 have... I mean, I am even admitting to you all that
12 it is really hard, even with emails and diligence, to
13 try to piece together things that are much... That
14 are four or five years later.

15 What I... What I will push back a little bit on
16 is that in the fullness of today's questioning, it is
17 clear that conflict of interests do come up with,
18 uhm, even individuals who are being considered for
19 COIB. Right? So, I am not the only one. Let me
20 just put that out there.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Mm-hmm

22 IFEOMA IKE: I do not know if the expansion of the
23 2019 Charter or even in essence anyone who was even
24 selected by The Mayor, would need to be fully free of
25 conflict. I think the... the real question, uhm,

2 and I say that in way of ensuring that with the
3 majority of people who work for the City, that may
4 have not known, uh, again, mistake of law is not a
5 defense, but may have not known what the fullness of
6 the laws are and how it could be implicated for them
7 in the future. I would hate for somebody to be
8 precluded from possibly being on COIB to help with
9 the diversity of the decisions and to support with
10 other forms of educational support because of things
11 that they were not fully aware of. That actually I
12 think screams to how the board moving forward could
13 support more equity and making sure all employees
14 have the information moving forward. So, I do
15 understand why for me individually these questions
16 are coming up. Uhm, I will say that I do think that
17 part of what I hope to bring to this space, is how,
18 even though my own misjudgments and mistakes, that we
19 can actually look at the context of the situations
20 that do become... that do come before the COIB
21 board. I think that is also why we have such a huge
22 discrepancy, to be honest, at times at every day City
23 Hall employees and individuals that are in senior
24 leadership. And, I think that that is something that

2 COIB board, whether I am on it or not, is actually
3 going to have to try to equify moving forward.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Well, we are both in
5 agreement that there is not enough publicity, if you
6 want to call that, information, training, excreta. I
7 mean, I think... I think, uhm, we all agree with
8 that 100%.

9 So, the question is, so, the company was started
10 when you were, I think from what we are
11 understanding, when you were still with the employee
12 of the City, but what you are also stating is that
13 the actual work did not start until after you had
14 left in 2018? Can you just go through again, because
15 I know sometimes... (CROSS-TALK)

16 IFEOMA IKE: Sure.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It is a little confusing.

18 IFEOMA IKE: No, it is... No, it was confusing to
19 me, because I actually have been waiting this
20 weekend, uhm, and wanted to do my own diligence on
21 this.

22 Uhm, so, the work that I was doing actually after
23 I left the City, I was doing really just because I
24 thought it was the right thing to do, it was, uhm,
25 supporting with getting, uh, specifically Black

2 fraternities and sororities, to be a part of how we
3 share information within communities of color and
4 Black communities, uhm, the conversation was not
5 about how Think Rubix was a part of doing that work.
6 The conversation was really just about... My
7 questioning was, am I allowed to even just support
8 this work that I think is important work?

9 The reason why, after speaking to, uh, Tristen,
10 that it was important to... for him to go back and
11 find the most... the latest document that had to
12 with the contract, was because I just wanted to see
13 the date on it. I wanted to be able to provide you
14 all with that date and that information. Literally
15 this morning, just to be very frank and part of
16 probably the reason why I was late, this morning,
17 he... When he stated that the document was sent to
18 him in June of 2018, I do not want to make any
19 speculation, because I was not in charge of
20 contracting, but it sounds to me that it is possible
21 that document was back dated. And, so, I... There
22 is a difference between the... when the work was
23 actually sent... When the contract was actually sent
24 to Think Rubix versus when the work was indicated on
25 the document. That is not to say that we were not

2 doing work. I think we were doing work, you know,
3 with our communities or what have you, uhm Think
4 Rubix was not paid for any of that work until middle
5 of 2018. So, I think what I am... Why I am asking
6 for a little bit more time to get you all that proper
7 timeline, is because I am also sifting through it as
8 well.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Mm-hmm

10 IFEOMA IKE: Uhm, but I do... I can absolutely
11 admit that for my personal, uhm, engagement -- and
12 the reason why I say my personal is because Tristen
13 is the managing partner, and he was the one dealing
14 with the contracts. But, for me, I do see... I will
15 say that there are definitely concerns around the
16 appearance of impropriety as it relates to actually
17 engaging with work, uhm, right after I had left City
18 Hall regardless of how good that work is. And, in
19 hindsight, I would have absolutely been the one to
20 ask questions about, can I even do this work?

21 Uhm, so, that is where I am at in my fact
22 finding, and I would like to share that information
23 with you all once I am very clear on that timeline --
24 and provide you all also those emails and the
25 timestamps as well.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I... I appreciate that.

3 I think the real issue is the timing, which you

4 agree... (CROSS-TALK)

5 IFEOMA IKE: Sure.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: is the issue. And, you

7 know, question is, what started before you left, what

8 happened afterwards, the date of the contracts...

9 IFEOMA IKE: Yep.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That is what is at stake.

11 And, I guess, uhm, you know, we are all trying to

12 figure that out. And I appreciate that you are

13 trying to be honest, but, uhm, [INAUDIBLE 01:13:34] I

14 hope that... (CROSS-TALK)

15 IFEOMA IKE: And, I will say nothing started

16 before... That part I think it has been asked and

17 answered. There was no deliberating a contract while

18 I was working for the City. That part, I... I am

19 clear.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, and... And, in...

21 Well, just in terms of strategy for getting the

22 concept across, were you involved with that in

23 terms of your... the company... while you were with

24 the City?

25 IFEOMA IKE: I was not.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Alright, thank you,
3 Mr. Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Okay, thank you, we will go
5 to Council Member Hudson, and then I am going to do
6 committee members, so Council Member Rafael
7 Salamanca, and then we will go the Public Advocate,
8 thanks.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay, thank you, uhm,
10 actually, can... Can you go to Salamanca and some
11 other folks first?

12 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Sure, we will go to Council
13 Member Rafael Salamanca next.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you, uh, thank
16 you, Mr. Chair. And, I... First I want to
17 congratulate the, uh, the nominees, and I want to
18 apologize for not being present today. My son is
19 sick, and I have to take him to the doctor
20 immediately after, uh, this hearing.

21 Uhm, Miss Ike, uh, very quickly, uhm, during your
22 time working with the, uh, The Mayor's Office, uh,
23 from February, uhm 2015 through October of 2017, uh,
24 did you ever work with the, uh, The Department of
25 Health on any projects?

2 IFEOMA IKE: Uhm, I am sure... I am sure we did,
3 because we were The Young Men's Initiative, so I am
4 sure that there were projects that we had worked on.
5 I cannot identify, like, specific projects, but I am
6 sure we did, because of our agency.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Okay, and, uhm, I know
8 I am going to jump around, and some of these
9 questions may be repetitive... (CROSS-TALK)

10 IFEOMA IKE: that's okay.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: I am just trying to
12 get a real understanding.

13 Uhm, during your time while you were working
14 between 2015 and 2017, uh, when you co-founded, uhm,
15 the Think Rubix, uh, did you work on that... on that
16 proposal that was submitted to the Department of
17 Health?

18 IFEOMA IKE: I did not.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: You... You... You
20 did not work on that proposal that was submitted to
21 the Department of Health?

22 IFEOMA IKE: You are asking for the... About the
23 Think Rubix... The Think Rubix... the work that
24 Think Rubix did?
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: The... The... The
3 contract that was submit... I guess the proposal
4 that was submitted to the Department of Health, uh,
5 for the original \$20,000 contract that was awarded,
6 did you work on that proposal?

7 IFEOMA IKE: I did not... I did not work on the
8 proposal with the... except for providing guidance
9 on, "These are the type activities that we could be
10 engaged in." Is that... Is... If that makes sense.
11 So, I think I have stated earlier when Council Woman,
12 uhm, Sanchez was speaking, that I did provide insight
13 as to "These are the type of activities that we could
14 do," but I did not work on the contract, and what was
15 shared to DOHMH or uh, to any other, like,
16 contracting agency.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: But, you provided them
18 with guidance and information?

19 IFEOMA IKE: I... I did.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: As a... As... As a
21 co-founder of your organization?

22 IFEOMA IKE: I... (CROSS-TALK)

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: While working at The
24 Mayor's Office?

2 IFEOMA IKE: So, I am confused, because there was
3 no conversation about this work while working...
4 while I was working at The Mayor's Office. If you
5 were talking about the contract that was... that we
6 worked on after I had left The Mayor's Office, I did
7 provide insight on the activities that we could
8 engage in, uhm, in the mental... for the mental
9 health strategy. But, there was no... There was no
10 contract or proposal while I was working at in The
11 Mayor's Office.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Okay, uhm, and then
13 my... my last question, is just curious, uh, while
14 you were working with The Mayor's Office, who advised
15 you, uh, that's, uh, and it was not necessary to get
16 guidance from the Conflicts of Interest Board?

17 IFEOMA IKE: Oh, I was never advised that it was
18 not necessary to get guidance from COIB; I was asking
19 this person as if they understood COIB, "Is there
20 anything wrong with me supporting this mental health
21 strategy?" so nobody said, "Don't go to COIB," nobody
22 said, "You shouldn't consult with COIB." They
23 answered as if they understood the COIB rules, and
24 had conveyed to me that everything was okay.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Okay, alright.

3 Alright, thank you for answering my questions.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

5 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Great, thank you. And, I
6 think we are going to go, uh, I think council...
7 Council... Yeah, I think Council Member Hudson has
8 questions for a little bit later. We will go to the
9 Public Advocate, and then Council Member Williams,
10 and I think we have Council Member Yeger as well who
11 has questions.

12 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Uh, thank you, Mr.
13 Chair.

14 Uh, thank you for answering all of the questions
15 and for being here.

16 I just wanted to clarify again, because it keeps
17 coming up, did you do any work at all -- advice,
18 point direction, do anything dealing with the
19 contract in question while were you employed by The
20 Mayor's Office?

21 IFEOMA IKE: no.

22 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Okay.

23 I also want to clarify as it has come up, uh, the
24 one year banning, when the work was done, my
25 understanding is not really the flag, the flag that I

2 understand happened was, uh, the contract that came -
3 - not the timing necessarily, except the timing
4 connected to when you were working, uh, in this
5 office. Uhm, I heard a few questions, I just wanted
6 to make sure, uhm, that I clarified that. I think as
7 mentioned, Miss Ike's experience is an experience of
8 many, many, uh, people who work and our employed not
9 just in The Mayor's Office but probably across the
10 City, uh, that probably do not know about COIB, do
11 not know how to interact with COIB, that does not
12 make any of it correct, but I do want to say, uhm,
13 both nominations, and nominations that I have been a
14 part of, have gone through these types of questions
15 on a regular basis. Possible conflicts. Things that
16 folks could have done differently. And, they get
17 talked through, uh, and most get approved. And, so,
18 I just wanted to make sure I pointed that out. Uh, I
19 just want to clarify if there is anything that you
20 would have done differently, uh, had this come up
21 again today?

22 IFEOMA IKE: Oh, sure, I mean, I... I would have
23 spoken to COIB. Uhm, and even work that I was doing,
24 whether you want to call it pro bono or what have
25 you, uhm, from my understanding of even the advisory

2 opinion, right? Like, opinions that are there that
3 could have even been seen as behind the scenes work
4 or work in support of existing work with the City,
5 uhm, I do agree that I think most City employees do
6 not have the full range of understanding, especially
7 upon leaving the City, of what they can and cannot
8 do. I think that that would have been a great
9 opportunity for me to ask, uhm, what I can and cannot
10 do. Most people do hear the one year ban, and the
11 way we hear it, for those of you that don't work in
12 city government, the way we hear it is, "one year ban
13 with the agency that you worked for". So, most
14 people move with that sense of, like, I'm not working
15 with where I used to work, so everything is... is
16 okay. Uhm, I had attempts to ask questions from
17 people who I thought knew better than me, I would not
18 do that again. Uhm, and I would make sure that I
19 spoke to a COIB advisor, and probably also keep that
20 on a... as an email, so that for times like this I
21 could actually raise it and reference it so that I
22 would not personally be questioned. So, those are
23 some just top lines of what I would do differently.

24 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: And, I think, just to
25 reiterate, you made no money off of the contract in

2 question, and you did no absolutely no work whether
3 advisory or others, to try to get the contract in
4 question while were you employed with The Mayor's
5 Office?

6 IFEOMA IKE: That is correct. All of the money
7 that came from this project, uhm, from what Tristen
8 shared, uhm, from the records, no payment was made
9 until 2018, middle of 2018, uhm, that goes to Think
10 Rubix, uhm as a company. Uhm, and the reason why I
11 mentioned that is that part of what this is about, is
12 that is not only the appearance of impropriety, but
13 COIB absolutely has an interest of making sure that
14 no one is getting unjustly enriched by any of the
15 contracts that come through the City. And, if I can
16 just be very honest here, this is... this was not a
17 con... These were not contracts of riches, uh, if as
18 much as I had left the City because it actually just
19 was not healthy for me anymore to work for the City
20 of New York, but if I really wanted to benefit from
21 the work that I was doing, I actually could have
22 stayed at the City, I would have made... personally
23 made money, and I would have had healthcare, and
24 there would have been a... There would actually...
25 There's actually an argument to say that I would have

2 been enriched, uhm, had I stayed with the City as a
3 City employee. Uhm, so, I... I... I understand the
4 appearance of impropriety, but it is important to
5 note, that I... None of these checks were coming
6 directly to me or benefitting me personally.

7 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you, and, Mr.
8 Chair, I just wanted to mention, with any... Neither
9 of these nominations, one of the things I think is
10 also looked at when looking at this is whether there
11 is a pattern of practice of these kinds of problems
12 and issues, I have not heard anything on any of the
13 questions brought up to both of the nominations about
14 their possible conflicts of any pattern or practice.

15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you, Mr. Public
17 Advocate.

18 Uh, we are now going to have Council Member
19 Yeger, uh, who is walking up here right now, go to
20 questions, and then we are going to go to, uh,
21 Council Member Williams and then Council Member
22 Hudson.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Good morning, uhm, just want to, very briefly on
25 the conflicts, uh, issues and, uh, particularly in

2 your response to Council Member Brewer, you know,
3 conflict of interests, uh, you are right, uh, we all
4 have those every day in all of our dealings. I am
5 friends with members of this council before I joined,
6 uhm, there are actually members of the council that
7 were clients of mine... (CROSS-TALK)

8 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

9 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Are there conflicts of
10 interests? Yes. The questions that we always deal
11 with when it comes to conflict of interests is there
12 are... There are two ways to look at conflict of
13 interests, one is, as I just described and the other
14 is, uh, the letter of the law. The, uh, the...
15 The... (CROSS-TALK)

16 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

17 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: The legal term, the phrase
18 of art of what constitutes the conflict of interests.
19 So, ,you know, as we sit here today, I do not think
20 we have a definite answer that the work that you did
21 was not necessarily a conflict of interests in
22 regards to Chapter 68. But, leaving that aside, I
23 think that the foundational question is, uhm, for me
24 you are not able to definitively state the name of
25 anybody who you spoke with who said, "This is no

2 problem, no problem," and it is just, I would think,
3 that that is the kind of thing that would stick in
4 your head, "I spoke to..." ,you know, "John Smith or
5 Mary Jones, and she or he said it's not gonna be an
6 issue," and if I am wrong just ,you know, let me
7 know. Uhm, uh, but as we also sit here today, I do
8 not think we have an answer from Conflicts Of
9 Interest Board that this was not the association that
10 rises to the level of a violation. And, to be clear,
11 violation, and your last response, this is what you
12 indicated, uhm, violation and conflict of interests
13 is not necessarily that you got money in your pocket
14 that was untoward... (CROSS-TALK)

15 IFEOMA IKE: Sure.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Not at all, okay. So, we
17 are clear. A violation of conflict of interests law
18 can be simply the conflict existing even you did not
19 make any money on it. Even if you did not personally
20 benefit...

21 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

22 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Even if nobody associated
23 with you as that, uh, phrase is defined in the
24 Conflict of Interests Law in Chapter 68, is violated.

25 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

2 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: It is simply that there is
3 a conflict, and that conflict is in violation of...

4 (CROSS-TALK)

5 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

6 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Chapter 68, that in and of
7 itself is a violation, and as we sit here today, we
8 do not have that answer, to my knowledge, because I
9 don't believe that the Conflicts of Interest Board
10 has ever told us, or you really, which is the
11 foundational start of when you were are about to do
12 something different, you just simply pick up the
13 phone. And, I think, uhm... Uhm, I'm sorry, I think
14 the former corporation council, uh, in her early
15 testimony, brought up the attorney of the day thing;
16 I will tell you I have used that, I used that as
17 recently as... as, uh, two weeks ago before I made a
18 call to the intergovernmental office of a City agency
19 about a constituent issue...

20 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

21 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: That I happened to know,
22 that a member of my family has that same constituent
23 issue. I wanted to make sure that my call to the
24 agency would not personally benefit my family member,

25

2 even though I was calling about a different
3 constituent.

4 IFEOMA IKE: Sure.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: That is the kind of
6 stuff... (CROSS-TALK)

7 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

8 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: that you do. So, attorney
9 of the day, uhm, the trainings that we get, yes,
10 could there be more training? But, when you reach a
11 certain high level at City Hall, the kind of high
12 level that you are filling a DOI discloser reports
13 and...

14 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

15 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: submitting, uh, to
16 questions about whether or not you have properly
17 filed your taxes, you have a higher level of...

18 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

19 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: the COIB obligations in
20 Chapter 68 than say the sanitation worker making \$50
21 grand. I think that is a fact. So, I think that you
22 are being held to a higher standard. It is fair for
23 you to take issue with it, but it is also fair that
24 you ought to be held to a higher standard, and of
25 course as an officer of the court, you do have that

2 higher standard, it is something that we expect, and
3 I think that that is why you are getting these sorts
4 of questions. That was not a question, that was
5 simply a very long winded, uh, Brooklyn-ey (sic)...

6 (CROSS-TALK)

7 IFEOMA IKE: Sure.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: uh, statement.

9 I am going to talk about a different set of
10 facts, uhm, and, uh, I hope you forgive the nature of
11 where these come along from, but, uh, I just want you
12 to understand, uhm, some of my feelings on this, and,
13 uh, speaking of conflict of interests, we all have
14 relationships in government, and I know some of the
15 people that I am about to talk about, uh, do you.

16 So, I am going to ask you the following, uhm, you
17 are quoted, uh, in the New York Daily News as saying,
18 "Do you know how crazy it is to work for this City,
19 and then explain to your community how you can work
20 for a man who pimps out his family to then have us
21 vote for you," that is your quote?

22 IFEOMA IKE: That is a quote.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Okay, and it is a fair and
24 accurate assessment of you said what you said. And,

25

2 you may not remember it word for word, but you were
3 not misquoted.

4 IFEOMA IKE: Uh, I think that is a little... It
5 is a little loaded what you just said, it is... It
6 is... It was a statement that I made at a rally.
7 Uh, I do think context matters. But, uhm, but, yes,
8 if you are asking me if that is a quote that I stated
9 roughly around, like [INAUDIBLE 01:27:58]... (CROSS-
10 TALK)

11 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: I mean, I know it wasn't
12 during an interview, I realize that it was at a...
13 You were holding a microphone or megaphone and saying
14 it at a rally... (CROSS-TALK)

15 IFEOMA IKE: Sure.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: to other people. So, that
17 is not that you assumed that you were going to be
18 quoted, uh, it is... it is something that was maybe
19 said off the cuff. I, uh, appreciate that.

20 IFEOMA IKE: That is correct.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Okay. Uhm, do you still
22 believe that statement to be fair, reasonable,
23 accurate, and truthful?

24 IFEOMA IKE: Uhm, I believe that that is not the
25 way I would state that sentiment today.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Okay.

3 Uhm, Merriam Webster defines pimp as: "a criminal
4 who is associated with, usually exerts control over,
5 and lives off the earnings of one or more
6 prostitutes."

7 Uhm, many members of this council know Mayor de
8 Blasio, uh, Miss McCray and their children, uh, in
9 different ways. We have served with them or we know
10 them. And, it is not easy to be in public service,
11 and when you do, you subject yourself and your family
12 to everything, uhm, the public light, which, you
13 know, nobody... nobody forced us to do this, but you
14 also subject yourself and your family to unfair, uh,
15 inaccurate, and hurtful things being said about them.
16 Uhm, but for me, this rises to a level of an
17 unforgivable attack. And, so, I want to ask you just
18 a few things about this: Number one, is... have you
19 spoken with the mayor, uh, Mrs. de Blasio, or either
20 of the children after you made that comment?

21 IFEOMA IKE: I have not.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: You have?

23 IFEOMA IKE: I have not.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: You have not? Okay, so you
25 have not in the two years since you made that comment

2 had an opportunity to call them up and say ,you know,
3 I... I feel bad about what I said, uhm, I shouldn't
4 of (sic) said that?

5 IFEOMA IKE: I do not believe I had the
6 relationship to call them or even their phone number
7 to do so.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Who hired you to be the
9 director of The Mayor's Office of The Young Men's
10 Initiative?

11 IFEOMA IKE: Uhm, I mean, technically, everyone is
12 hired under the tutelage of the mayor. Uhm, I, uh,
13 came through the former Deputy Mayor, Richard Buery,
14 uhm, and the direct supervisor was, uhm, William
15 Garrett who was at that time the Executive Director.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: And, prior to you're being
17 hired, did you also... Did you interview with the
18 mayor?

19 IFEOMA IKE: With the mayor directly?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Yeah.

21 IFEOMA IKE: I did not.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Just the deputy mayor was
23 the highest?

24 IFEOMA IKE: Uh, was the highest, correct.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Okay, and subsequent to
3 your hiring have you had an... an opportunity in you
4 work on behalf of the City to interact with the
5 mayor?

6 IFEOMA IKE: Sure.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Okay. And, from... From
8 that time, uh, when you decided, I suppose, at... I
9 believe at the time that the statement was made you
10 were actually still working for the mayor?

11 IFEOMA IKE: [INAUDIBLE 01:30:50]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: As you were talking to
13 staffers, colleagues of yours...

14 IFEOMA IKE: No, I was... (CROSS-TALK)

15 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: No?

16 IFEOMA IKE: Not [INAUDIBLE 01:30:55]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: You had already left?

18 IFEOMA IKE: I had already left.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Okay. Uhm, when you...
20 Yes, I'm sorry, I apologize, you left in October of
21 2017?

22 IFEOMA IKE: Correct.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Alright, okay, alright.

24 Uhm, at... After you made that statement, and we
25 already discussed this, I am not going to beat the

2 dead horse, but you, uh, you know, you... You...
3 You... The mayor is somebody knew personally, yes,
4 you did not have that kind of relationship, but it
5 has not occurred to you... It had not occurred to
6 you, I mean, you are... you are aware that some of
7 these comments, uh, have percolated here in the
8 council, I know that the council staff have spoken
9 with you about, uh, these comments and asked you if
10 they were accurate, at... Uhm, or at least I am told
11 by... by members of the council staff that you were
12 asked before this hearing... (CROSS-TALK)

13 IFEOMA IKE: [INAUDIBLE 01:31:42]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: If these are accurate
15 [INAUDIBLE 01:31:42]

16 IFEOMA IKE: Yes, I was... I was asked during my
17 investigation for this position, uhm, about
18 statements, uhm, things that were in the public...
19 (CROSS-TALK)

20 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: But, this is... (CROSS-
21 TALK)

22 IFEOMA IKE: Uhm, and so this is... So, it was
23 asked... This... It was asked just like you had
24 asked me. Uhm, it may not be the answer that people
25 like, but I am an honest person, so... (CROSS-TALK)

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: No, uh, you... You got a
3 lot of... (CROSS-TALK)

4 IFEOMA IKE: So, I shared that I had... (CROSS-
5 TALK)

6 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: I will tell you... (CROSS-
7 TALK)

8 IFEOMA IKE: I had stated...

9 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: I will tell you, you have
10 got a lot of credit for, uh, for acknowledging that
11 those were your statements and not saying that you
12 were misquoted or misstated or it wasn't you or
13 anything like that... or it was just wrong. So, you
14 get a lot of credit for that, but I... You...
15 (CROSS-TALK)

16 IFEOMA IKE: Well, it is not about credit. I
17 do... I want to state that... (CROSS-TALK)

18 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: It is good to be
19 truthful... (CROSS-TALK)

20 IFEOMA IKE: Well, truthful, but, I... Uhm, I do
21 want to speak a little bit to what you are alluding
22 to or what you had raised around had I not thought to
23 reach out to their family. Uhm, which is also what I
24 think is also somewhat related to it is, am... Do I
25 regret that statement or do I... Am I sorry for that

2 statement? That statement, uhm, would I make that
3 statement on a day to day basis? Absolutely not. Do
4 I think the context of why the women of color
5 especially were out there that day, do I think that
6 matters? I do. Do I think there have been
7 conversations that have been raised with the former
8 mayor about the conditions of women of color who have
9 worked for this city, and that they have gone on deaf
10 ears? I do. And, do I think that there were even
11 attempts by me directly with The Mayor to address
12 some of the work that we call EquityNYC today, I was
13 the person co-drafted the Equity Executive Order for
14 the City, and it was specifically to talk about the
15 unfair conditions that especially Black and Brown
16 women experience while working here. And, on many
17 occasions, he had undermined that. So, I absolutely
18 agree with you, Councilman, no, no person who is
19 especially an adult professional, wants to hear those
20 words played back to them when they know that they
21 are not great words, but they are hurtful words.
22 Thank you for giving the definition of pimp. There
23 is also a different interpretation of the word pimp
24 that has nothing to do with prostitutes. I am a
25 Black women that grew in a Black neighborhood, so

2 when we use the word pimp, it does not relate to
3 prostitution; it actually relates to using things for
4 your advantage... (CROSS-TALK)

5 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: I... I... I appreciate...
6 I appreciate the... (CROSS-TALK)

7 IFEOMA IKE: I... I just want... you to put for
8 the record that definition, so it is actually
9 important that for the definition there... (CROSS-
10 TALK)

11 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: I... I appreciate the...
12 (CROSS-TALK)

13 IFEOMA IKE: are multiple... (CROSS-TALK)

14 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: I appreciate the...
15 (CROSS-TALK)

16 IFEOMA IKE: Interpretations of the word pimp...
17 (CROSS-TALK)

18 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: And I appreciate the
19 explanation. I do very much. But, at the end of the
20 day, for me, uhm, they're... they are his children.
21 They are his children. They did not... They...
22 They did not ask for this. They did not. They are
23 his children. And I am not... I am not trying to
24 scold you, I promise you, I am really not. You know,
25 the... The... The member of the council who

2 nominated you to this position knows me for a long
3 time. I am not... I am trying to be, uh, as
4 [INAUDIBLE 01:34:26]... (CROSS-TALK)

5 IFEOMA IKE: What would you like me for... for me
6 to do, sir? I hear what you are saying... (CROSS-
7 TALK)

8 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: It is not a cross-
9 examination, I am not trying to call you out or
10 anything, but for me, as I listen to it, and I
11 have... I, too, have been called on the carpet here
12 on this floor, uhm, by my friend for tweets. Things
13 that he did not agree with that I found to be
14 truthful, uhm, and that he had issues with. And, uh,
15 we have had conversations of these... in these pious
16 chambers about that. So, you know, what is... It
17 happens. And, but... But for... The place that
18 I... That I just... That I cannot get my brain
19 around it, it is... And... And, it, you know, yes
20 if it was glib, if it was done in the heat of the
21 moment and things like that, I understand, but they
22 are his children, uhm, and I just... I... I cannot,
23 you know, we all... A lot of us have children, and
24 ,you know, we subject them to the life of public
25 service and what that means, uhm, and his kids have

2 gone through a lot in the eight years of him being
3 mayor and have been in the public eye, and they have
4 been called a lot of stuff, and the person... A
5 person who worked in the administration, who worked
6 in, you know, at the highest levels of government,
7 you were not... You were not a Parks ranger, uhm,
8 you were running a mayoral office, uh, a strategic
9 initiative, something that was created under him, and
10 to come to the place where you could say something
11 like that, assuming even if you did... whether you
12 did or did not believe it, or if you were saying it
13 to... to make a point or to be hyperbolic, or
14 whatever the case may be, but at... It has been two
15 years. And, I just would have thought that in the
16 last couple of weeks, when this question came up from
17 the council's investigative staff, you would have
18 said, "You know, let me just send the mayor a quick
19 text or an email," and say ,you know, "I said that
20 two years ago. I probably shouldn't have, and, you
21 know, please know I am thinking about you, and I hope
22 you are doing okay," uh, something like that. It
23 is... It is just... The fact that you just blew it
24 off as a thing that happened two years ago, and that

2 is no longer of consequence, and it is what it is and
3 let us move on, I just... (CROSS-TALK)

4 IFEOMA IKE: I would not say, I... I... I
5 would... I appreciate what you are saying, and I
6 even acknowledge that in two years, I could have and
7 I should have reached out to the mayor. Uhm, I do
8 not think it is an accurate portrayal to say I blew
9 it off. I did have reasons... (CROSS-TALK)

10 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Fair... fair... Fair
11 enough... (CROSS-TALK)

12 IFEOMA IKE: For not... But... (CROSS-TALK)

13 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Fair... Fair enough...
14 (CROSS-TALK)

15 IFEOMA IKE: But I do appreciate what you are
16 saying... (CROSS-TALK)

17 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Fair enough. Let... Let
18 me go to, uhm, and... And, by the way, I do... I do
19 want to say, some of your responses earlier on, uhm,
20 I found them to be, uh, scholarly, uh, and well
21 thought, particularly in relation to, uh, the issue
22 of the fines that are imposed by, uh, the Conflicts
23 of Interest Board on low-level employee who may or
24 may not have known that he or she, uh, is... took an
25 action that constitutes a violation. Uhm, and, then,

2 uh, there are some cases where the behavior is so
3 egregious, uh, you know, what... If... It... It
4 goes beyond the sanitation worker taking a \$10.00 tip
5 to move a piece of furniture in to a truck, but it
6 goes to a double dealing and things like that, so you
7 do see, you know, a level of fines. But, for the
8 most part, uh, and you... One of your responses was
9 that, uh, you had never experienced or known a City
10 employee who has experienced a COIB investigation
11 that resulted in a trial. And, the answer is most do
12 not. Very, very, very few, uh, rise to a level of a
13 trial. Usually it is those that there are
14 significant question of law, uhm, whether the COIB is
15 actually interpreting its own rules in a proper
16 way...

17 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

18 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: But, every other one of
19 these, uh, for the most part, I mean, I... without
20 knowing the percentage, I would say greater than 95%
21 are negotiated settlements, uhm, after the employee
22 is presented with the information of the wrong doing,
23 and then the staff looks at, uh, the history. The
24 stare decisis in effect, uhm, of what the COIB had
25 done in the past.

2 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

3 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: How would you, uhm, given
4 that that the board is actually not making
5 determinations, but simply signing off on
6 settlements, for the most part... (CROSS-TALK)

7 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

8 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: usually done simply by the
9 chair...

10 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

11 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: How would you effect your
12 view of a more equitable...

13 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

14 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: uhm, punishment? And, by
15 the way, I want to say, I do agree that somebody who
16 makes \$50,000 a year perhaps a \$5,000 fine represents
17 10% of their income, is too excessive, far beyond the
18 \$25.00 parking ticket for not putting a quarter in
19 the meter. So, I think that there is a place for
20 that, but I am curious how you get that... to that
21 place if you are on the board?

22 IFEOMA IKE: Yeah, I mean, I think this is a
23 conversation that I would continue to, uhm, I would
24 love to engage the board and city council on.

25 Because, even in the con... Even when we think of a

2 95% settlement rate, I would still question if there
3 were inequities in how people decide... just decide
4 that they do now want to, you know, and that they
5 would like to resolve a situation via settlement.

6 Uh, as of right now, I do not believe that, uh, it is
7 mandatory; although, I think a lot of people would,
8 you know, could consult their union counsel or what
9 have you -- if you do not have someone to consult
10 with and there is a settlement, it is kind of akin to
11 our civil and our criminal legal system, a lot of
12 things plea out. Right? People plea out, and that
13 does not mean that there are not inequities. That
14 means that people want to settle. Uhm, and when
15 settlements are made, those settlements are also made
16 public, uhm, from what I understand. These are...

17 These are the final decisions of individuals who are
18 admitting guilt, uhm, and that is made public. So,
19 as a new board member, I would want to engage in a
20 conversation about, Do we have any data... data or
21 data, uhm, or empirical tools, excuse me, uhm, that
22 could help us determine if there are individuals who
23 are, first resolving the first question, do we
24 believe that a settlement automatically means
25 fairness? And, I think that is a real question,

2 because that in itself is an equity issue. And,
3 then, are there ways that we can try to figure out if
4 those who... even those cases where a settlement was
5 achieved that inequities may or may not have existed,
6 whether from representation, whether, uhm, from ,you
7 know, tools that people may want to reveal. And,
8 that is going to be difficult, because I think you
9 would have to go back in time, uh, to kind of consult
10 with individuals that may have had a COIB violation.
11 But, I am just raising that, like, one of the things
12 that I think we need to do is actually have a little
13 bit more conversation around, do settlements
14 automatically equate equity, uhm, and if there are
15 some ways that we can improve how individuals make a
16 decision about what will ultimately be something
17 public for them?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Okay. I appreciate that.

19 Uhm, I am... I have nothing further right now,
20 Mr. Chairman, so I will turn it back to you.

21 I want to thank you very much.

22 And, Miss Pestana, I just want to say very
23 briefly, you were here when I served in the council
24 in the last session for your confirmation, and uh,
25 the issues that... that, uh, were mentioned today

2 were addressed at that time. And I am grateful that
3 you have taken the time address them again. But, uh,
4 what I would reflect, and I have reflected this in
5 the past, uh, particularly on... at the last, uh,
6 time that the council, uh, was confirming you, uhm,
7 you have... you have dedicated in service to The Law
8 Department, uh, a career, a lifer at The Law
9 Department, I guess is how someone would describe it
10 to you. So, you are ascension to becoming
11 corporation counsel was, uh, was... was very worthy
12 and deserved, and to, uh, the extent that these
13 conflicts... these... these questions of conflicts
14 have remained postdate, I will just point out that,
15 since that time, there have been answers to the
16 questions of the conflicts, and I say that, uh, that
17 part was to you. And, the rest of it is just simply
18 to the broad public, the difference that I see
19 between the two situations is that with respect to
20 one nominee, there was a definitive answer that the
21 council is able to look at, saying that ultimately
22 there was no conflict, and yes... (CROSS-TALK)

23 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: It could have been handled
25 better for sure, uhm, but ultimately it was held to

2 be no conflict and the proper questions, uh, and
3 clearances have been attained. Uh, whereas in
4 another situation simply not the case at this point.
5 So, we are kind of, you know, operating in a vacuum
6 of, uh, of lack of information.

7 IFEOMA IKE: And, as... And, as I mentioned, my
8 hope is that I do at least provide the information
9 that is outstanding, so that you all can make that
10 deliberation... (CROSS-TALK)

11 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: And, thank you very much.

12 IFEOMA IKE: You're welcome.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Thank you.

14 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you, we have, uh, some
16 members moving... But, uhm, we have Council Member
17 Borelli, I believe, here. And then, Council Member
18 Restler, and, then [INAUDIBLE 01:43:10]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Uh, thank you, Mr.
20 Minority... I mean, Majority Leader, uh, thank you
21 for, uh, testifying. And, I apologize for the
22 discourtesy of not, uh, appearing in person today.

23 Uhm, I just have a couple of questions about some
24 things that you also had said, uhm, specifically
25 about City workers.

2 Uhm, you have taken a political stance about
3 defunding the police, and that is fine. I am not
4 here to argue politics with you, but there have been
5 some statements about abolishing the police and the
6 character of police officers, uhm, they are employees
7 of the City and would be under your prevue as a, uh,
8 a board member of COIB...

9 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: how... Can you explain
11 to me how you could be impartial, uh, given your past
12 statements?

13 IFEOMA IKE: Sure, thank you for that... for that
14 question. Yeah, let me start by saying that, uhm,
15 you are right. Like, we do not... We do not need to
16 debate, uhm, on, uhm, the stance as it relates to the
17 history of just the criminal legal system as a whole.
18 Yes, I am an attorney, but I also have been critical
19 about the field of law as well. So, it is not just
20 limited to criminal legal space. Issues that would
21 come before COIB, uhm, as to conflict of interests,
22 there are a couple of things: First, of all, I would
23 be... If appointed, I would be one of five, uhm, and
24 I would be looking at the same set of facts, and I
25 would also be looking at the, uh, Chapter 68 to make

2 a determination as to what the outcome should be for
3 that case by case situation. Uhm, I would not come
4 in to that space, uh, with a predisposition or a
5 notion around who they employee is, where they work,
6 what agency did they work for? So, that is... That
7 is important to state. And I actually appreciate you
8 asking that question, uhm, because many of us could
9 make assumptions about any one based off of their
10 relationship with any agency or their belief in any
11 type of stance. But, it is really important that
12 when we are looking at these situations, that we are
13 looking at what the alleged violation is, what the
14 chapter is, and making the decision on the other side
15 as it relates to specially that chapter... that part
16 of the Conflict of Interests Law.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Uhm, on, uh, March 26,
18 2021, you tweeted, uh, "Forgive me if I don't trust
19 white people, men, or anti-Black people of color, uh,
20 in my hood, over my body."

21 Can you just explain what you meant by that, and
22 whether that would give the impression that, uh, you
23 might be, uh, prejudicial towards white defendants or
24 accused people who come before the board?

2 IFEOMA IKE: Can you read... I'm sorry could you
3 repeat the last part of that or just the whole tweet
4 again, please?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Sure, uh, the full tweet
6 is, "As a first generation, visually impaired, dark-
7 skinned, Black woman from poor, immigrant parents,
8 forgive me if I don't trust white people, men, or
9 anti-Black people of color in my hood over my body.
10 Data, lived experience, and wounds force to
11 prioritize my life over your feelings."

12 IFEOMA IKE: Uhm, and the date you said March
13 2021?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: March, uh, 26th of
15 2021.

16 IFEOMA IKE: I would love to go back and check a
17 couple of things. First, any other tweets that I
18 had... that were made during that day, but also if
19 there were any... if there was anything within the
20 greater public conversation as it related to that
21 day. Uhm, without knowing what unfortunate incident
22 had had happened in the news at that time, I would...
23 I would guess that that was in response to some type
24 of injustice or some type of a violent act that that
25 had happened toward a person of color on that day,

2 uhm, and that that was a response of mine. But, I
3 would really want to see what was going on on that
4 day, and to see if I even had any other tweets around
5 that tweet that would help answer that question.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Sure, I... I get it, I
7 tweet things that I imagine some people find
8 offensive all the time, uhm, the difference between
9 my job and the job that you are hoping to get is that
10 people elect me based on my political opinions and
11 personal opinions...

12 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: The difference with COIB
14 is that we are choosing you and voting for you based
15 on your ability to impartially, uh, mete out justice,
16 in this case the people accused of violating the
17 City's, uh, COIB law.

18 Uhm, there is a more recent tweet, from February,
19 "I have been just asked by client if it is fair to
20 say "White people are dangerous until they prove they
21 are not?" [Parenthesis] "They are white". Can you
22 just explain what you meant there?

23 IFEOMA IKE: Sure, the tweet that came before that
24 was, on that day, uh, 12, I believe 12 HBCUs, for now
25 two days in a row, had received bomb threats, uhm, on

2 their campuses. Uh, and there were no major national
3 conversations about it. They day that that tweet has
4 been shared, uhm, and I'm not... I am also going to
5 admit that it was not necessarily the best tweet,
6 uhm, but I was actually with clients that were white,
7 they happen to work with HBCUs, and when they had
8 caught wind of the bomb threats that were happening
9 at HBCUs, the response that I had gotten from that
10 client was, "Oh, my goodness, this is awful, this is
11 terrible, why is nobody talking about this?" and,
12 then the host... And, in the midst of that
13 conversation, she asked me if, "Is it safe to say
14 that you would not trust white people unless they
15 prove to you that you could be safe?" And, I think
16 in that tweet that put out there, uhm, I had...
17 There was like a picture that was attached to it,
18 because what I was actually trying to bring attention
19 to was my uncomfortably of being asked by a white
20 person, hey, are... Do you basically see us as
21 unsafe unless we prove to you that you are safe?

22 So, that was really the context of that tweet.

23 It was not in any way to imply that white people...

24 And, this... And, this actually only came to me as a
25 result of this investigation, one of the staff here

2 had explained their interpretation of the tweet,
3 which was not even what I went in to the tweet, uh,
4 thinking. I went in to the tweet thinking, that's
5 actually really, uhm, different and in some ways
6 really encouraging for me, as a Black woman, that a
7 white person had asked me basically, "How safe do you
8 feel around me?" That is basically what she was
9 trying to ask me. Uhm, and I only put in parenthesis
10 that the client was white, because I wanted folks to
11 know that this person --I think -- was exemplifying
12 some form of ally-ship by letting me know that like,
13 I see you, and I am able to understand that this is a
14 grave situation. So, that... That is the fuller
15 context of that tweet... (CROSS-TALK)

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: I actually appreciate
17 your answer, because I... I... I had read the
18 parenthesis as that being the answer to the question
19 and thus offensive, but... (CROSS-TALK)

20 IFEOMA IKE: No, I get. I... (CROSS-TALK)

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: But, thank you for
22 actually clarifying that.

23 IFEOMA IKE: Sure.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: That makes more sense.

2 Uhm, one more tweet, uhm, when Betty White, who
3 we all loved passed away, you wrote, "This White can
4 stay." So, what about other whites?

5 IFEOMA IKE: (LAUGHING) So, Betty White, her last
6 name is White, uhm, so, that was my way, I believe
7 that was New Year's Eve, that was just my way of,
8 like, saying, this is a cool, fair, white woman.
9 Uhm, this was not to say every other white person in
10 the world is not also on the same status as Betty
11 White. That was, uh, in our community we have this
12 called the cookout, uhm, and we always are talking
13 about who can be at the cookout, who cannot be at the
14 cookout. And, sometimes you identify that by saying,
15 this person can stay. And, so, that was really just
16 to say Betty White could be... could come to the
17 cookout, to be honest, she could stay. Uhm, that was
18 not to say that other white people could not stay...

19 (CROSS-TALK)

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: I get it, but it
21 certainly is a cute play on her last name, uhm, I
22 mean, I don't know too many other people who are
23 named White that would be then excluded by the little
24 play on words. Uhm, so, you have to understand why

2 I, like, I... I might find this offensive. You
3 know, to use a comparison, if... (CROSS-TALK)

4 IFEOMA IKE: Mmm...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: If the late Sidney
6 Poitier passed away, and I said, "This Black could
7 stay," or if an Asian person, I said, "This Asian
8 person could stay"...

9 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Uhm, I guess, let me...
11 Let me ask you a question, if I had tweeted a picture
12 of Sidney Poitier...

13 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: And said, "This Black
15 could stay," would you find me fit to be on a
16 committee that is expected to judge people
17 impartially based on the color of their skin?

18 IFEOMA IKE: I see what you are saying. Uhm, I
19 would say in an ideal world, all of our tweets, we
20 would all be able to enter into society where all of
21 our words and all of our tweets could start from the
22 position of each of us having the same experiences,
23 the same treatment, the same judgment, and the same
24 outcomes as it relates to how we interact in society.
25 What I appreciate about at least the way you are

2 asking me these questions, is you are asking me these
3 questions, uhm, I would even say with the hope that
4 we could all move forward, and to be honest with you,
5 I would never have to say, "This White could stay,"
6 uhm, to signify what it means for a white person that
7 actually sees humanity, that actually sees, uhm, the
8 injustices of our communities, and has a history-
9 long, at that point almost a 100 years, of showing
10 different ways that she proactively was advocating
11 for civil rights and human rights, and specifically,
12 uhm, the rights of Black people. So, I, on one hand,
13 I do see what you are saying, that if you, uhm, and I
14 don't want to make the assumption of your... Of your
15 race, uhm, Sir, are you white?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: I am, and I am chubby,
17 too.

18 IFEOMA IKE: Okay. Uhm, (LAUGHING) I did not want
19 to make an assumption about your race. So, uhm, I
20 think you posed to me a really fair question that,
21 could you... could you tweet something like that? I
22 would be honest with you, I don't know if you tweeted
23 something like that that that would not have a
24 response. Because, unfortunately, the context is not
25 just about the tweet, it would be about, are you

2 raising that to really bring along a really
3 complicated history of unfortunately white/Black,
4 uhm, dynamics as it relates to the social construct.
5 I will say that I did tweet that as somebody who
6 identifies as very, uhm, pro-Black. And, when I say
7 pro-Black, that does me to the expense of everybody
8 else. But, that does mean that I do feel like I
9 fight for ensuring that, uhm, all communities, and
10 Black communities also make sure that they are
11 treated with equity and respect. And, if we are
12 honest with ourselves, those comments maybe are seen
13 and are not seen in the same way as being
14 discriminatory or exclusionary to other communities.

15 So, I think that there is a larger conversation
16 about why you tweeting that would maybe be perceived
17 as something different.

18 To your final question of, uhm, would you want
19 somebody like that on the COIB board, the only thing
20 I can say is, one of the questions that I asked the
21 COIB staff, uhm, was has there ever been a Black
22 woman that has served on the COIB board? I do
23 believe that what was brought back to me was, "We
24 believe there was a Black woman, but it was a very
25 long time ago." And, all I am saying is that, as

2 somebody who has served in this city, and it does not
3 mean that the other COIB members do not care about
4 equity or equality or race or gender dynamics, I am
5 saying that I am coming into this space as a Black,
6 somewhat chubby, woman, uhm, who also is in this
7 space, who works in this space in equity every day.
8 And, not because I am Black, because I actually do
9 have both empirical, legal, but also research skills
10 that works on, how do we improve the lives of
11 communities of color and poor and communities every
12 day? That is the perspective that I come into this
13 space. I would not want to be judged on any one
14 action. I would not want to be judged on any one
15 tweet. But, I do appreciate the questions that, uh,
16 Council Member Yeger, that you have raised, that many
17 other folks have raised, because it is fair for you
18 all to ask yourselves, can you trust that this person
19 would be able to come in give us a fuller vision of
20 what employees deal with every day, so we can make
21 better decisions. So, that part is up to you all.
22 But, I do come in to this space with that
23 perspective.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: You're... You're at...
25 I appreciate your answer, and it offered a very

2 idealistic, uh, view of a relationship between Black
3 folks and white folks in the City. But, you are also
4 going to have to deal with people who have a less
5 idealistic vision...

6 IFEOMA IKE: Sure.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: or perhaps one that you
8 even find offensive.

9 I... I guess, uhm, I have some tweets from you
10 about Trump, and I am not going to ask about Trump,
11 but, just... Just tell me, and say... And, just
12 make me feel good about it, I mean, guess, if you had
13 a, just for argument's sake, a sanitation worker,
14 who, you know, wearing his MAGA hat...

15 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: right winger, someone
17 that you politically find abhorrent, can you just
18 tell us whether or not you would be able to be, uh,
19 non-prejudicial in determining whether they have
20 committed some violation of COIB? And, that is my
21 final, uh, question for you.

22 IFEOMA IKE: Yeah, sure, do not know how I would
23 see the how the... And, this is... This may just be
24 how COIB operates, I would need to learn more about
25 the engagement of how, because I think you were

2 raising the visual appearance of how somebody would
3 show up, how that would inform my decision? It is
4 important, I have not... And, I am terrible at
5 leading with my credentials, I do not talk about
6 those things, but it is important to me that as an
7 attorney that has a civil rights and a public
8 interest leaning background, that I am not looking at
9 somebody's appearance or their political beliefs as
10 the basis of how I start my decision. I don't think
11 ... I don't know if you were here for the opening
12 statement when I spoke, but I actually grew in a
13 conservative home. My dad is still a conservative.
14 I have family members that are conservative. They
15 have their range of beliefs; they vote differently
16 than me, we fight, it is an amazing Thanksgiving
17 dinner, you all invited to see how those
18 conversations turn out. But, at the end of the day,
19 when there is a violation to anyone in my own
20 immediate family, regardless of their beliefs, I do
21 think we have to look at what is in violation. And,
22 as somebody who is a family member of them, I am of
23 course going to be looking at, how can you get what
24 you need to be protected or to be able to have an
25 adequate defense? I would not go into an issue of a

2 sanitation worker and look beyond the fact that they
3 are a City employee --that there is a an alleged
4 violation towards them -- and to be honest with you,
5 I think the hardest thing would be to try to not be
6 overly protective of City employees and to really
7 take a step back and look at this from the letter of
8 the law. But, I will say, that sometimes people do
9 not fully understand what City employees go through.
10 I will say that. Even as I am getting these hard
11 questions, I am recognizing how much I wish I knew
12 while I was working here... And, I did not know all
13 of those things. So, I actually come in with the
14 empathy of perhaps more City employees are
15 misunderstood within COIB, and so if they want to
16 MAGA, let them MAGA away but that has nothing to do
17 with what are they alleged to have done, and are
18 there ways that we can make sure that A, we can
19 provide preventive or measures that do not result in
20 punitive as our first response, and then are there
21 ways that we can identify individuals that are just
22 like sanitation worker so that they can have the
23 tools to not engage in this alleged behavior or the
24 appearance of impropriety in the future. That I
25 think is... is part of the reason why I said yes to

2 this nomination, not for any political or personal
3 stance. And, I knew coming in to this, I was a very
4 vocal person and sometimes funny person and sometimes
5 not. But, I do take fairness and equity very
6 seriously, and I also hope that is highlighted as
7 well.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Well, thank you very
9 much, uh, for testifying and, uh, I will move on to
10 the next speaker, thank you.

11 IFEOMA IKE: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you, and please do not
13 remind me of Joe Borelli's Thanksgiving if you want
14 to remember his two years ago... (CROSS-TALK)

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: It was a great time. It
16 was a great time.

17 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Uh, thank you to the Minority
18 Leader, we are now going to go, I am going to just
19 run to the bathroom really quick, and we are going to
20 go to Council Member Restler if he is still on? He
21 is? Okay, we are going to go to Council Member
22 Restler, and then we will be followed by Council
23 Member Nantasha Williams, and then our Public
24 Advocate Williams, and then Council Member Hudson.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great, thank you so much,
3 Mr. Majority Leader, uhm, I just wanted to, uh, both
4 The Comptroller and Public Advocate for their
5 impressive nominations to COIB. Well, I have not had
6 the opportunity to work with the Public Advocate's
7 nominee, uh, your reputation precedes you, and uh, I
8 want to thank you for your thoughtful answers today.

9 I have had the privilege of working, uh, closely
10 with Georgia Pestana over a number of years, and I
11 just wanted to say, I would be remiss to think of a
12 more capable and qualified candidate, uh, to serve on
13 COIB. Uh, Georgia spent her entire career, uh, just
14 about with The Law Department, and, uh, knows the
15 City of New York, uh, and... and the workforce of
16 the City of New York as well as just about anybody.
17 Uhm, she, if I recall correctly, prior to her tenure
18 as, uh, corp counsel and as the number two in corp
19 counsel, she also oversaw the employment policy
20 division, uhm, and ,you know, I have been through
21 many, very challenging and complex, experience, uh,
22 kind of, uh, many complex and challenging issues with
23 Georgia, and she is smart, level headed, has
24 exceptional integrity, uh, cares deeply about the
25 City and the people who work for the City. Uhm, you

2 know you have a group of people at The Law Department
3 who are there, uh, administration after
4 administration, and Georgia was one of the truly
5 superb ones, uh, who ,you know, really, uh, I felt,
6 always looked out for the best interests of New
7 Yorkers. And, so, just wanted to express my strong
8 admiration of her and her selection, uh, as a nominee
9 to COIB. Thank you.

10 GEORGIA PESTANA: Thank you, Council Member
11 Restler, just saying, hi.

12 IFEOMA IKE: Thank you

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Nice to see you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We are now going to recognize
15 Council Member Nantasha Williams.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Hello, and, uh, congrats
17 to both nominees. I know these are very odd, tough
18 things to go through, uhm, all in all to help New
19 Yorkers, which is the... That is the biggest thing
20 here. We are all here, uh, because we believe in
21 public service.

22 Uh, so, uh, I just had a few questions, and, uh,
23 before I start my questions, I just wanted to state
24 that I have also had very personal interactions with
25 Ify, and I know that, uh, she is very fair and

2 partial, even in our personal conversations, uh, it
3 is exactly what she said, it does not matter, red,
4 blue, green, white, republican, democrat,
5 conservative, libertarian, uhm, she brings her full
6 self and is very outspoken, uh, within... within all
7 of the spaces.

8 Uhm, and so one of the questions I had was, uh,
9 did you ever make any disparaging comments about the
10 administration, uhm, while you were working for the
11 administration -- for the... the previous mayor?

12 IFEOMA IKE: While working for The Mayor?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Mm-hmm.

14 IFEOMA IKE: Uhm, I don't believe so.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, awesome, because I
16 know that was brought up, and I just wanted to
17 underscore that you... While you were working there
18 you did not make any disparaging... (CROSS-TALK)

19 IFEOMA IKE: No.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: comments.

21 IFEOMA IKE: No.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Great.

23 Uhm, and, uh, I wanted you to also talk a little
24 bit more in terms of the context, because I know a
25 lot of your previous tweets were highlighted today.

2 Uhm, I just wanted to give you the opportunity if you
3 have not yet sort of fully kind of explained the
4 context behind some of those, uhm, tweets. I am a
5 person where context does matter, so I wanted to
6 understand some of the context behind the tweets that
7 have been in question during this hearing.

8 IFEOMA IKE: Yeah, I mean, I think that the
9 hardest... Sorry, I think that the hardest thing
10 about this whole thing has not been the questions
11 that have been raised.

12 Uhm, if I could have stayed in the City while
13 during the work that I was doing, I would have
14 stayed. A lot of women of color, and especially a
15 lot of Black women that I worked with closely, left
16 the City for various forms of treatment that they had
17 experienced and may be still expiring at the City.

18 What often is seen as just, oh, City employees
19 have grievances or, you know, we know that there are
20 differences, there is something very interesting
21 about how Black women are treated here at the City.
22 And, believe it or not, it was during while I was at
23 The Mayor's Office that I believe it was The
24 Comptroller at the time had put out a report about
25 the difference in pay and in the difference in

2 promotion, and just the different experiences that
3 Black women experience working for the City. My
4 first inequity that that I experienced with the City
5 was, I thought that I was coming in under a certain
6 salary amount, and it still would have been kind of a
7 cut of what I thought I was going to be receiving,
8 uhm, but as someone who was the most degreed person
9 on my team, uhm, and even my first higher was to
10 another woman of color, it was not a Black woman, but
11 another woman of color who had a disability, who also
12 was then the second most degreed on our team, her
13 qualifications were constantly diminished every day
14 because of her disability. And, when I finally did
15 advocate and get, a year later, the pay grade that I
16 should have been at, I was told to... that I needed
17 to thank this particular individual for ensuring that
18 I received the salary that I should have received
19 when I first came to the City. That term in many
20 spaces is called microgression. It is easy to all
21 call something a microaggression when it not
22 happening to you. But, when something is happening
23 on a constant bases, and sometimes on multiple...
24 and, multiple times during the day, and then you are
25 asked to come back and fully serve within the City,

2 and there is no recourse as much as even City Council
3 and a lot of spaces talk about equity for all, if you
4 will, we were definitely in a space where people were
5 advocating, uhm, on various initiatives for how the
6 data showed that we needed to reach more communities
7 differently and that would not work. We would... We
8 would want to do things, uh, with specific... It...
9 We would want to do things to improve the conditions
10 within the office, and, uhm, in the conversation that
11 I had with your colleague, Council Member Yeger, I
12 personally had been asked, uhm, by The Mayor of the
13 City, after he had found that I left and the question
14 was, "I do not understand why so many highly
15 qualified, you know, people, why are we losing this
16 many people from the City?" And, I, without
17 hesitation said to, him, "Because the City is hostile
18 towards smart, Black women," and I meant that. That
19 is not an issue that is an easy one to state, and
20 that is not an issue that is an easy one to tackle,
21 but I do think that what often happens is that the
22 person who states the issue is the one who is
23 attacked; we do not attack the issue that is on the
24 table.

2 And, so, I appreciate you allowing me to at least
3 a fuller context of what is happening. I have found
4 that even in spaces of color, people will roll their
5 eyes or they are diminished when we raise this
6 issues, uhm, and so what ends up happening is that we
7 sit in silence. And, as you know, Nantasha, because
8 I lead a company that tries to address this in other
9 companies, what we often find is that Black woman are
10 also dealing with different health disparities and
11 different outcomes than their colleagues, because
12 they are dealing with the stress at work.

13 So, it was ultimately the stress at work that was
14 part of that statement. I agree with Council Member
15 Yeger that it was not necessarily a proper statement,
16 and I will consider actually apologizing specifically
17 for that statement. It is also important to
18 understand why almost a 100 if not over a 100 women
19 of color signed on to a letter stating that working
20 at City Hall was extremely hostile, and it does rise
21 to the level that we need to talk about it.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you, I appreciate,
23 uh, your answers. And, I am actually going to get to
24 Pink Cornrows in a second.

2 Uhm, but I just had a very silly, basic question,
3 do you believe in, uhm, freedom of speech that people
4 should sort of be able to talk about their
5 experiences, uhm, in meaningful ways in public?

6 IFEOMA IKE: I do believe in the freedom speech.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, did you ask to be
8 appointed?

9 IFEOMA IKE: I did not.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, because I think it
11 is important sometimes when we think about these
12 appointments, uhm, and typically certain types of
13 people get appointment to these positions, uhm, but I
14 think it is... It is critical that we be intentional
15 about bringing people in to these spaces that have a
16 full scope of experiences, and I do not think people
17 live their lives thinking that they might be
18 appointed to something like this. And, then, of
19 course, [INAUDIBLE 02:10:03] to much needed scrutiny,
20 though again, I also, uh, thank my colleagues for the
21 questions that were raised, it is definitely in
22 alignment, we want to make sure that we have people
23 who are impartial. Uh, I just wanted to note that.

24

25

2 Also, while we were all speaking, uhm, and now I
3 am trying to pull it up and... Oh, my computer
4 froze. Hi, can you hear me?

5 IFEOMA IKE: Yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Oh, my computer, like,
7 completely froze. The joys of technology.

8 Uhm...

9 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: We can still hear you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. Can you hear me
11 now?

12 IFEOMA IKE: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: We hear you.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, alright, alright,
15 now I am fully back, because I can hear you and my
16 screen was frozen.

17 Okay, so while we were... While you were
18 speaking, I actually looked up the Merriam Webster
19 definition of... And, I think you were articulating
20 this Black vernacular. I always joke; I am currently
21 in a PhD program, I know a lot of big words, but, you
22 know, sometimes I just like to use Black slang. It
23 is just my thing. It is just how I like to show up
24 as well -- it's my fullness.

2 So, we know and the definition here, African-
3 American English, is the proper way they talk about
4 it, which is, "a variety of American English spoken
5 chiefly by African Americans Like all other dialects
6 of English, with their own histories of how they came
7 to be..." So, we know that when we use Black
8 vernacular or African-American English, as Merriam
9 Webster defines it, we are bringing in our own
10 history around certain words and language. And, so I
11 know you were attempting to put on the record your
12 definition of the word pimp, and so I just wanted to
13 allow you to put on the record your definition of the
14 word pimp.

15 IFEOMA IKE: (LAUGHING) I do... And, I... And,
16 so when I think I said, "pimp out", which as you know
17 in AAVE or African-American vernacular, also has its
18 own... its own definition. Uh, "pimp out" does not
19 mean anything sexual activity. It does not mean
20 anything to do with prostitutes. It has nothing to
21 do with the exchange of sexual activity for money.
22 Uhm, "pimping out" is used an expression to say that
23 you are using... It can be a range of things, but
24 you are using as a cover, in that context, you are
25 using a cover, uhm, something that may appeal to, in

2 that context to a community in an exchange for favor,
3 in an exchange to be liked, in an exchange to that
4 they would be supportive. Uhm, it was... There are
5 ways that I could have even said that phrase without
6 saying "pimp out", uhm, but when... If you are
7 asking me about that term, it is at least important
8 in the fuller context of the sentence, that it did
9 not have anything to do with, uh, with the harm...
10 With the, uh, with the traditional definition or the
11 traditional, I guess Eurocentric, definition of that
12 term. Also, as you know, on the other side, uhm,
13 when we look at words, prepositions, subject matter,
14 objects, what have you, when... If I were to say, *I*
15 *am Nantasha, you know, stop pimping out this can.* The
16 *can* itself is not the subject that I am talking
17 about. I think you and I understand that. I am
18 literally talking about your actions that should be
19 questioned. So, while I do not necessarily agree,
20 uhm, with the definitions and the terms that, uh, in
21 the conversation between myself and Council Member
22 Yeger, one thing that I did not consider, is that
23 there could be an interpretation that there would be
24 harm to The Mayor's wife or The Mayor's children. I
25 was not speaking about the wife and the children --

2 directly about any actions they had done. They were
3 raised as him using them, uh, as a way to gain favor
4 with Black communities -- at least in that context.
5 Uhm, but it is important that I do acknowledge that
6 there could be another way of interpreting that, but
7 it is... I do appreciate that you have at least
8 allowed me the fullness of sharing what that
9 statement was. Uhm, even in the heat of the moment,
10 that statement was stated, yes, in a way that I felt
11 like was in a room of people that understood what I
12 was saying.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you.

14 Uhm, and as I was speaking to the... Or as I was
15 listening to The Minority Leader, and I also really
16 appreciated his line of questions, and I think
17 something that you did fully speak about that I also
18 wanted you to just talk about, uhm, that might make
19 him feel comfortable or Council Member Yeger feel
20 comfortable, or whoever else that might be listening
21 who ,you know, wants to feel comfortable, uhm, your
22 work at Pink Cornrows and your work in general, and
23 some of the things in conversations that I have been
24 in prior to being a council member, is about having
25 this daring discussions...

2 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

3 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Uhm, and these
4 courageous conversations, and so, not attacking
5 certain people but being open and flexible to other
6 viewpoints with the hopes that we all can come
7 together fully as whole, as New Yorkers, as citizens
8 of American whatever ,you know, whatever we want to
9 say. And, so, I just wanted to talk... I just want
10 you to talk a little bit more about the work that you
11 have done to sort of have these conversations with
12 different types of people, uhm, to really address
13 this issue in a meaningful and professional way.
14 Because I think that the conversation so far has been
15 skewed towards, uhm, some of the personal that you
16 said, which, again, is fair, we all agree it is fair
17 for those things to come in to question, but I just
18 also wanted for you to just express a little bit more
19 about some of the work that you have been doing
20 professionally around a lot of this issues that have
21 been raised.

22 IFEOMA IKE: Yeah, I mean, I understand why...
23 especially for COIB, uhm, why the issues that have
24 been raised have been raised as far as spending some
25 time on getting clarity about work that had been done

2 at the former firm that I had worked at and also
3 statements that I have made.

4 I will say for the record, it is refreshing to
5 know that somebody, even at this late hour, has asked
6 me about the work that I am doing now. And, that is
7 important. I am four years older, four years further
8 down the road -- almost five years from when I served
9 at the City. And, nothing has been asked to me up
10 until this point about the work that I am doing now
11 and how that work is relevant to what is needed on
12 the COIB board. So, I do want to acknowledge that,
13 and thank you for asking this question.

14 As you know, Pink Cornrows, uhm, is a team of
15 individuals, most of us are terminal degreed as they
16 would call them, that have a combination of both the
17 professional experience and the credentials to
18 discuss equity, to research equity, and to create
19 solutions from polices to social solutions to, uh,
20 research that informs leaders in various fields.
21 But, we also come in to this space, as you said, not
22 having to code switch. In other words, we come into
23 this space knowing that we are not, uhm, we are not
24 excellent because of our degrees, we are excellent
25 because we come in both our cultural experience and

2 the degrees... and the tools that we have that
3 usually come from the training that we have in
4 specific fields to help improve environments and to
5 help make sure that equity is achieved.

6 I would like to think the reason why I was
7 nominated for this specific body is because every
8 day, including when I have to leave here, I am
9 literally researching how we do not look at issues
10 and just say "all City employees", but for anybody
11 who has dared to ask me even why I am interested in
12 being in this space -- the first question, I think
13 one of the first questions I asked some of the COIB
14 staffers were, do we have a breakdown based on race
15 and gender of who the individuals are that have
16 received infractions in this City? Do we... Are we
17 even aware of what that looks like? Do we care that
18 there could be potentially the majority of the
19 individuals that are getting punishments are
20 individuals of color in this City? Do we have
21 anything not stating that that is the case? I do not
22 know if we have that information. I think that
23 information matters. And, I think that we cannot
24 keep saying that COIB is a space of education, and
25 not a space of punishment if the date on the other

2 side actually proves differently. Now, I am not
3 saying that that is the case, but since you asked
4 about Pink Cornrows, that is the lens that we go in
5 to -- how do we create solutions? People assume that
6 Black and Brown people that have been marginalized
7 just come in to spaces based off of emotion. But,
8 even in the field of law, there is a way to look at
9 decision, standing decisions, and even descents to
10 get a sense of how communities have been treated so
11 that we can make improvements moving forward. So,
12 even as we make education tools moving forward, I
13 love the hotline, I appreciate being reminded that
14 there is a telephone hotline. I am more interested
15 as to why more people are not using the hotline to
16 get the information that they need. And, that is an
17 equity question. That is a question of, do we need
18 to make sure that the hotline is reminded on a weekly
19 basis? Do we need to make sure that people are able
20 to go in to convenient, you know, to convenient
21 spaces, whether it is courtyards, bathrooms, what
22 have you, and have information about COIB? I don't
23 know COIB? I don't know, but I think we cannot just
24 say that we have tools, and then assume that
25 everybody knows every rule in Chapter 68 of Conflict

2 of Interests. We actually have to think about how
3 the delivery of those tools are made. And, also,
4 when it comes to abilities and disabilities and
5 language barriers, we also have to make sure that is
6 communicating in a culturally relevant way so that
7 everybody can have protection of knowing that they
8 had access to these tools.

9 So, I appreciate you asking what... A little bit
10 about the work that I do and also how I think that
11 could... Or how those parts could be relevant to
12 service on the COIB board.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, well, I just
14 wanted to, uhm, thank you so much again for answering
15 the questions so thoughtfully. Uh, while you are of
16 course very ideological, like we all are, like we all
17 should be, we all should imagine a world that is
18 better and more equitable than what we see right now.
19 I do know that you are a very practical person, a
20 very fair person, a very honest person, uhm,
21 regardless of the situation of the scenario. And, I
22 know you have mentioned multiple times upon
23 reflection, uhm, thinking of ways you could have
24 handled things a little bit differently, or maybe
25 tweeted something ,you know, used other words, uhm,

2 reached out to attorney ,you know, on call or all of
3 these things that you have been discussing in this
4 hearing. And, I just want to say, you know, we all
5 have things that we could do better. I just want to
6 offer that the rules are not clear. Even when you do
7 reach out, I have had to reach out in my very short
8 tenure, to the Conflicts of Interest Board, and I
9 have received subjective advice. You know, one
10 attorney says this, another attorney says something
11 different, uhm, and I think it just speaks to, uhm,
12 the need for us to clarify, uh, what the law is, and
13 to make sure that everyone is aware and has access to
14 the resources. And, I think from your personal
15 experiences that you have outlined that have been
16 interrogated today, I think that it is even a greater
17 reason for you to be a part of this body, because you
18 have personal experience and can lend that experience
19 with an equity lens, uh, to make this board, uhm,
20 even better. And, so, I just wanted to thank you
21 again, thank the Public Advocate for making the
22 nomination, and just for the record, underscore my
23 support of your nomination.

24 Thank you so much, Chair.

25 IFEOMA IKE: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. I think we are
3 actually going to go to Council Member Hudson, and
4 then to the Public Advocate to close us out.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you.

6 Just a couple of questions, and then I will turn
7 to make a bit of a statement I guess.

8 But, uh, my first question is, is there an oath,
9 or perhaps less formally, a commitment that attorneys
10 take in order to practice that addresses fairness and
11 impartiality?

12 IFEOMA IKE: Yeah, I mean, I think under the ABA
13 Professional Rules of Conduct, uh, as we are sworn
14 in, there both the explicit sections, but also the
15 implied notion that we are all extensions Lady
16 Justice, if you will, that we balance both the facts
17 as well as the consequences of those facts while we
18 are making our decisions and our deliberations. And,
19 uh, for those of who practice a little bit more
20 explicitly in Civil and Human Rights Law, uhm, we are
21 always reaching out to various document, treatises,
22 codes, if you will, which speak about, uhm, speak
23 explicitly to various forms of even the constitution,
24 but Human Rights Law in... more broadly, uhm, around

2 how we can ensure that every human being has
3 equitable access to what they deserve to have.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Uhm, and then this was a
5 little while ago, so bear with me...

6 IFEOMA IKE: Sure.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: But, uhm, as followup to
8 Council Member Salamanca's questions...

9 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Either he asked, or you
11 stated, and I do not recall...

12 IFEOMA IKE: mm-hmm

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: which... which it was, uh,
14 but I believe he may have asked, if anyone in The
15 Mayor's Office -- this was in reference to your
16 comment about being, uh, asking the question whether
17 it was... (CROSS-TALK)

18 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: an issue, uhm...

20 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: I believe he asked if
22 anyone told you not to go to COIB. And, you stated
23 that nobody told you not to go to COIB...

24 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

25 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: If I am correct.

2 IFEOMA IKE: Right.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: And, so, my question is,
4 did anybody tell you explicitly to go to COIB?

5 IFEOMA IKE: No.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you.

7 Uhm, and then, lastly, following the line of
8 logic from Minority Leader Borelli, uhm, on February
9 24th, myself and a number of other elected officials,
10 not just in The Council, but across the city and
11 state representatives, along with advocates and
12 activists, rallied outside of City Hall on the day of
13 our last stated meeting, on February 24th, about the
14 anti-LGBTQ, uh, appointees...

15 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: by The Mayor, and it is my
17 understanding that especially on a day of a stated
18 meeting when a rally occurs, what has happened
19 historically and what can happen, is that when
20 somebody feels a particular affinity to an issue, and
21 they happen to be walking by or hearing something
22 about that... the subject of that rally, anybody
23 can, you know, come and say, especially a council
24 member, uhm, "This is something that I feel strongly
25 about. I would love to make a statement," or

2 something. I went back to Minority Leader Borelli's
3 Twitter feed on February 24th, and I saw nothing that
4 stated any opposition or concern about The Mayor's
5 appointments of anti-LGBTQ folks. And, when I say
6 anti-LGBTQ, I want to make sure for the record, uhm,
7 these are people who have made explicit statements
8 about people who look like me.

9 IFEOMA IKE: Mm-hmm

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: And, so, following his
11 line of logic, I just want to state, for the record,
12 that the same The Mayor has asked eight million New
13 Yorkers to trust his judgment for his appointments, I
14 would like to say that I ask my colleagues to trust
15 the judgment of the Public Advocate in his
16 recommendation for your appointment.

17 Thank you.

18 IFEOMA IKE: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you, and we have, I
20 believe the Public Advocate has a final round of
21 questions.

22 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Uh, thank you, uh, Mr.
23 Chair. Thank you Council Member Hudson, uh, for that.

24 I just wanted to make sure that I put a couple of
25 things on the record as well, because we have gone

2 through quite some time talking about tweets. And, I
3 am thankful that some of the context was put in
4 place, but I wanted to make sure, if I am correct, a
5 lot of those tweets, particularly the first ones
6 about, uh, the family of The Mayor, was during a
7 Black Lives Matter protest. There was energy all
8 over this city, this state, and this country, uh,
9 there was a lot of passion that was being put forth
10 on some very significant issues that many people had
11 been holding for some time. As my colleague Council
12 Member Yeger has said, uh, he has been passionate
13 sometimes with his tweets as well. Uh, but, unlike
14 some of those tweets, Miss Ike has actually
15 recognized that it could have been worded differently
16 and has said as such. And, so, I am thankful that
17 that is on the record as well. Uh, but I think in
18 that context, we also continue to mention how many
19 people there and expressing, uh, concerns that they
20 have, and even at a later time, additional employees
21 of the former administration, uh were talking about
22 the issues they had with that administration. So,
23 that I want to make sure that context remains on
24 there. And, if we are all judged by the most
25 passionate statements we make, we are going to be in

2 problems. And, so, the best thing you can do is
3 bring it up to someone, and if they acknowledge that
4 it could have been worded differently, I think we
5 should take them at their word.

6 I do also want to point, I... I believe we had
7 this conversation, and I think this was trying to be
8 talked about, uh, that there is inequity in how
9 people are perceived in the world, and I do know that
10 the people who have the highest burden, uh, are
11 people who are trying to uplift the issues of Black
12 people, are trying to uplift the issues of Black
13 women in particular. A great case in point is Joe
14 Borelli pointing out a tweet that I had not known
15 about, uhm, but it was interesting, because there
16 were a couple of groups that were mentioned there,
17 white, non-Black, and people of color, uhm, some
18 white men and anti-Black people of color, he only
19 asked about white folks. He only asked whether they
20 should be able to have unbiased when it came to white
21 folks. Which is... It shows me again the
22 difficulties of people who are experiencing harm --
23 expressing it -- it usually is most tense when people
24 are discussing the issues that Black people are
25 facing. So, even as he is talking about, uh, whether

2 she can be unbiased in COIB, when you look at the
3 record of Black women in particular, Black maternal
4 health, and Black people getting, uh, healthcare;
5 when we look at the policing issues that we have been
6 talking about, that has not been what the problem
7 was. The problem has been, uh, quite the opposite,
8 and so I hope he joins us when we are raising the
9 issue about where the problems actually are. While
10 of course everyone has to be treated unbiased, I
11 wonder if the question would have been asked if she
12 had simply said, "I don't trust men to make decisions
13 about my body." It really seems that when those
14 questions are asked about Black people who are
15 feeling harm, everyone's back gets raised up and
16 there are some different questions that are asked.

17 And, so I think that is unfortunate, but I am
18 hoping that we begin to learn that there are
19 different experiences that people have, which means
20 everybody cannot say the same thing and have the same
21 response because their experiences are very
22 different, uhm, and it is important to say that.

23 But, I am happy, even in that, there is
24 acknowledgement that things could have been said
25 differently. I have had to acknowledge sometimes

2 myself, uh, that things could have been said
3 differently. Maybe one day I am hoping my councilman
4 will be able to join me in saying that we can word
5 some of things differently as well.

6 When it comes to the contracts, just to
7 reiterate, it was on the record that there was no
8 money given to the nominee, uh, and there was no work
9 done on procuring all of the actual contracts while
10 she was on The Mayor's, uh, team.

11 There was a question about who had told her about
12 whether it was okay to do this or not, I am not sure
13 if that is particularly relevant, because I do not
14 know if that would have changed the facts on the
15 ground. I think the facts are, even with the
16 testimony given, that in looking back on it, had the
17 information been given, she would have and should
18 have reached out to COIB. So, I am not sure that
19 that question makes the most sense. And, I just
20 wanted to reiterate that she will giving additional
21 documents to The Council, uh, trying to get some of
22 the timeframe correctly.

23 But, I appreciate the time that everyone has
24 given here. I think as we are trying to get
25 particular voices in these spaces, the voices we

2 should [INAUDIBLE 02:32:18] on are people who have
3 spoken up about this. And, people who have spoken up
4 about these issues will inevitably have questions
5 that should be asked. I have been in this side
6 asking questions, so I think these valid questions to
7 ask, but I think the answers are valid as well. And
8 I think they really did get to the heart of what
9 people were asking, and I hope that is taken in a lot
10 of consideration for both of these nominees, uh,
11 where the issues that were raised.

12 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Great, thank you.

13 We have two more questions. I am just going to
14 ask folks if we can keep them a little bit short and
15 to the point just for the respect of time.

16 Uh, we are going to go to Council Member Sanchez,
17 and Council Member Yeger, thank you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Great, thank you, Chair.
19 Uhm, Miss Ike, I just want to thank you for being a
20 staunchly pro-Black advocate throughout your career.

21 Uh, I wanted to address something that my
22 colleague Council Member Borelli said earlier about
23 ,you know, how would you feel, how would we feel
24 about, uh, a statement that. "Could this Black, uh,
25 stay at the barbecue?" or something along those

2 lines. And, just wanted to just acknowledge and give
3 deep respect to racism being a term that is...

4 (CROSS-TALK)

5 IFEOMA IKE: Right.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: defined by power --
7 right? -- it is defined by a history in this nation,
8 in particular of Black oppression. And, is it not
9 the same to say, you know, "This white can stay" or
10 this Black can stay". It is not the same. Right?
11 So, I wanted to... to just, uhm, to give voice and
12 space to that and give you change to talk about that
13 difference and now racism and being pro-Black is
14 about Black power in this country and oppression for
15 so many years.

16 IFEOMA IKE: I mean, since we are on the record,
17 I, for myself, I wanted to just highlight, like, this
18 is the New York City that we are in. Right? You all
19 have all heard this, and I hope it is not seen as
20 just rattling off, but I was prepared, because the
21 tweets that were raised, uhm, as you rightfully
22 shared, and I will even merge it into what the Public
23 Advocate just shared, I am not a spokesperson for all
24 people of color, uh, one of the things that I did not
25 have time to do, uh, was to raise the tweets where I

2 have actually stood up for individuals who are
3 outside of my race. Because, often times it is
4 perceived that you are only standing up for other
5 Black people -- which would be fine -- but, anybody
6 who knows me knows that my human rights background
7 means that if there is an issue... Uhm, in as you
8 know I formally Lehman, so any of my students there,
9 whatever they are going through, I have advocated
10 for.

11 Uh, in this city, you know, we know that Black
12 women are three times more likely to die of pregnancy
13 related issues, uhm, Black babies are also three
14 times more likely to die, Black men are 8 to 20 times
15 more at risk of being incarcerated, only 52% of our
16 city is Black and Brown; we make up 90% of our jails.

17 Why am I saying this? We rattle these things off
18 as statistics. We get upset one somebody is killed,
19 and somebody is hurt, and somebody is harmed.

20 While this is about COIB, and it is about
21 everyone that is in the City, we do not talk about
22 the fact that this is already a majority people of
23 color city. So, it actually is important to ask
24 ourselves, are there differences? Not for the sake
25 of making us more divisive, but are there differences

2 in the way we interpret the law? If the law has
3 treated us differently historically, it is possible
4 that communities have different interpretations of
5 the law -- even as an attorney. This is why we have
6 a Supreme Court where every attorney has a different
7 ideology and they are looking at the same law.

8 So, I am not saying that I am a perfect person.
9 And, for the record, I am not even saying that you
10 all have to make a certain decision or not, but I do
11 think that it was very hard to be asked the question,
12 as I tried to reflect back to Council Member Borelli
13 -- I respected where he came from with his
14 perspective as a white man, a self-identifying white
15 man who is asking these questions -- but what also
16 has to be respected as Jumaane... excuse me, as the
17 Public Advocate had raised, is that I am also coming
18 in to this... Like, who I am matters as well. And,
19 I am a Black woman in this city, but I am also a
20 daughter of immigrants; I am a daughter of people
21 that are poor; and so I am going to have an
22 interpretation of City government and that
23 interpretation matters. To throw that out and say we
24 should all come to the table and have an equal way of
25 looking at things, is also to throw out what it is

2 that I had struggle through and get through to even
3 just be an attorney, and what it means for me now to
4 be in a space where, yes, we are asking fair
5 questions, but if we are going to be honest, as a
6 person of color and even as a Black person, the way
7 each person asks questions is also a little
8 different. And, that is not for me to accuse anyone
9 of how they were asking questions, these are fair
10 questions to ask, but that is to say that the higher
11 likelihood of bias or the higher likelihood of
12 looking or asking certain questions, we can hide
13 behind the rule of law and say that it is fair. But,
14 there is a reason why 90% of our jails looks that
15 way, and we are all saying that it is fair.

16 So, all I am saying is that I think that equity,
17 when I think of what happened in 2019, it was to make
18 sure that more fairness happens. And, even if I am
19 not the person that you all nominate, I hope we do
20 not lose sight of this conversation, because is the
21 Public Advocate's first time nominating someone, so
22 that individual should have a lens of not only the
23 law, but what it means for people who are extremely
24 on the margins, what they are experiencing as city
25 employs for the City. That matters. And, I thought

2 that was more important than talking about just black
3 and white.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you

5 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you, I believe, uhm
6 Council Member Yeger is not asking a question.

7 Uhm, so, uh, I will just close out, and I, first
8 of all, congratulations to both of you on your
9 nominations, and, uh, we appreciate you guys both
10 sitting here today and taking what I am sure what,
11 uh, a lot of questions and some that were expected
12 and some unexpected. I think it certainly would be
13 helpful to get more clarity and information...

14 IFEOMA IKE: Sure.

15 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: and we have discussed. And,
16 I totally recognize that there is difference sort of
17 categories in tracts here, but I think as said in the
18 earlier side, uh, this committee and myself and
19 others had questions about the... exactly the
20 contract that ,you know, something that is
21 pertinent... most pertinent to the Conflicts of
22 Interest Board and your potential nomination...

23 (CROSS-TALK)

24 IFEOMA IKE: Sure.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: to that and our vote on that.

3 So, we would appreciate if you can [INAUDIBLE
4 02:38:57] and similarly if we have questions we will
5 be sending them over as well to Miss Pestana.

6 So, I want to thank you both, uh, and everyone
7 who has... We have nobody from the public signed up?

8 Do we have anybody from the public here? They
9 are not that interested in us, I am sorry to tell
10 you.

11 Uh, but, anyway, we thank everyone here who
12 viewed and participated in this. We will recess
13 today's hearing, and it will be reconvening this
14 Thursday, March 10th for a vote on these nominations.

15 Thanks so much.

16 IFEOMA IKE: Thank you.

17 [GAVELING OUT] [GAVEL SOUND]

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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 April 8, 2022