

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

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February 12, 2015  
Start: 10:46 a.m.  
Recess: 11:03 a.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E:  
BRAD S. LANDER  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Inez E. Dickens  
Daniel R. Garodnick  
Ydanis A. Rodriguez  
Margaret S. Chin  
Deborah L. Rose  
Jumaane D. Williams  
Rafael L. Espinal, Jr.  
Mark Levine  
Vincent M. Ignizio  
Melissa Mark-Viverito  
James G. Van Bramer

2 [background comments]

3 [gavel]

4 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Good morning and  
5 welcome to this reopened meeting of the Committee on  
6 Rules, Privileges and Elections. I'm Brad Lander,  
7 Chair of Committee; we're joined this morning by  
8 Council Members Inez Dickens, good morning, Margaret  
9 Chin, Rafael Espinal, Mark Levine, Ydanis Rodriguez,  
10 the Minority Leader Vinny Ignizio and Debi Rose;  
11 thank you guys all for being here; thanks also to  
12 Jason Otano, our Committee Counsel and the staff of  
13 the Investigative Unit, Chuck Davis, Deandra Johnson  
14 and Diana Arriaga.

15 As we discussed at the beginning of this  
16 recessed meeting last week, on January 16, 2015 Mayor  
17 Bill de Blasio submitted three names to the Council,  
18 Wellington Chen and Kim Vauss for the Landmarks  
19 Preservation Commission and Hank Willis Thomas for  
20 the New York City Art Commission; they appeared  
21 before us last week at our meeting and provided  
22 testimony and fielded questions. A couple of notes  
23 that have been received since then; at that meeting  
24 we had Wellington Chen's letter from the Conflicts of  
25 Interest Board articulating any of the steps he'd

2 need to take to make sure that the nonprofit boards  
3 he sits on don't prevent a conflict; he told us in  
4 person that he would abide by it; he has since  
5 presented us a written letter committing to abide by  
6 it.

7           We did not have at that meeting Kimberly  
8 Vauss' COIB letter; it actually arrived by email  
9 while we were having the hearing, so everyone has  
10 that letter and also has her letter committing to  
11 abide by the COIB guidance. As you'll remember, her  
12 conflicts are somewhat more substantive; she works at  
13 a firm that appears before the Landmarks Preservation  
14 Commission; she does not work on LPC issues and has  
15 said she won't and doesn't appear before the LPC  
16 Board and has said she won't and she's not a partner  
17 in that firm and you know, Council Member Greenfield  
18 expressed the opinion that since it is a position in  
19 which some expertise is required; most of the people  
20 that have it are going to be people who work in the  
21 field, but that is obviously part of the evidence  
22 before you today.

23           And then on Hank Willis Thomas, there are  
24 no conflicts; he works as painter and artist and  
25 sculptor, so he doesn't have any conflicts, but as

2 members are aware who were here, there was extensive  
3 discussion with him about the Art Commission, also  
4 known as the Public Design Commission, on the great  
5 frustration that many members have had with our  
6 capital projects and he, being relatively new to this  
7 whole process, listened to us, but didn't have a lot  
8 to say about it, but he committed that he would carry  
9 back to Faith Rose, the Executive Director of the  
10 Public Design Commission the strong concerns he had  
11 heard from Council Members and she has followed up  
12 with this letter date February 11, 2015 that is in  
13 your packets and that we'll make part of the public  
14 record; I won't read the whole thing, but just kind  
15 of a couple of points, just so people will hear. She  
16 worked previously, Ms. Rose, at the Department of  
17 Design and Construction and so she says, "given this,  
18 I am quite familiar with both the strengths of the  
19 Design Commission and the areas which could benefit  
20 from improvement, members of the de Blasio  
21 Administration informed me of the discussions at Mr.  
22 Thomas' confirmation hearing before the City  
23 Council's Committee on Rules, Privileges and  
24 Elections. I am aware of the frustration that  
25 Council Members expressed regarding the Public Design

2 Commission and its impact on the timing and cost of  
3 capital projects to improve the parks, streets and  
4 public realm in their communities. Immediately upon  
5 taking this new position..." and then she outlines in  
6 the next couple of paragraphs steps that she has  
7 started to take to streamline the Public Design  
8 Commission process, both on administration projects  
9 and she says on Council discretionary capital  
10 projects as well and invites us to "sit down and work  
11 together to schedule a meeting so I can hear your  
12 suggestions for how to improve the PDC and share my  
13 vision with you in more detail; there's a lot of work  
14 to be done and I am excited about streamlining our  
15 process, improving communication with our capital  
16 agencies and broadening the dialogue to include all  
17 stakeholders," so I invite members and members of the  
18 public to peruse the full letter. You know, speaking  
19 just for myself on this, I would love even more... you  
20 know, I'd love to already be in a position at this  
21 point, 13 months into the de Blasio Administration,  
22 where we had seen some progress; that said, you know  
23 I feel heard by this letter and I believe in Faith  
24 Rose's commitment and certainly in Mr. Thomas'  
25 commitment to work with us to make some positive

2 change here and I am prepared to enthusiastically  
3 vote for Mr. Thomas following receipt of this letter,  
4 as I thought he was a quite remarkable nominee.

5 We've been joined by Council Member Jimmy  
6 Van Bramer, who is Chair of the Council Committee on  
7 Cultural Institutions and Libraries, which the Art  
8 Commission is overseen by and so I've spoken with him  
9 and also with our Parks Chair, Mark Levine about this  
10 letter as well and I know they are eager to take up  
11 the offer made in the letter to sit down with  
12 Ms. Rose and map out -- hear from her the changes  
13 that she's planning and also [background comments]  
14 push forward the changes that Council Members feel  
15 they need.

16 Good morning, [background comment] nice  
17 to see The Speaker here with us. Have any other  
18 members come in? No. Okay. So having said all  
19 that, we can move forward to the vote and then let me  
20 just remind people that if the Council gives its  
21 advice and consent, Wellington Chen from Queens and  
22 Kim Vauss from the Bronx would both be appointed to  
23 the LPC for terms that expire June 28th, 2017 and  
24 Hank Willis Thomas, who is a Manhattan resident, be  
25 appointed to the Art Commission in the seat

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2 designated for a painter and eligible to complete the  
3 remainder of the three-year term that expires on  
4 December 31st, 2017. So unless members have  
5 questions or comments they wish to make before we  
6 proceed to the vote... seeing none... we will go ahead  
7 and proceed to the vote. So we are coupling the vote  
8 on all three messages concerning M 0224 regarding  
9 Wellington Chen; M 0225 regarding Kim Vauss, along  
10 with the message M 0226 regarding Hank Willis Thomas  
11 and we'll ask the clerk to call the roll. Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE CLERK: Kevin Penn, Committee  
13 Clerk, Roll Call in the Committee on Rules,  
14 Privileges and Elections, M 0224, 0225 and 0226.  
15 Council Member Lander.

16 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: I vote aye on all.

17 COMMITTEE CLERK: Dickens.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Aye.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK: Rodriguez.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Aye.

21 COMMITTEE CLERK: Chin.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Aye on all.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK: Rose.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Eye on all.

25 COMMITTEE CLERK: Espinal.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ESPINAL: Aye on all.

3 COMMITTEE CLERK: Levine.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Permission to  
5 explain my vote, Mr. Chair.

6 [laughter]

7 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Of course.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: We follow  
9 protocol here. I will be voting aye in part because  
10 I think Mr. Thomas is such an outstanding candidate,  
11 both as an artist and his commitment to civic duty  
12 and the public benefit; I share Chair Lander's deep  
13 reservations about the existing process for PDC and  
14 how it impacts Parks' capital projects; I'm happy to  
15 receive this letter; I wish it had more details on  
16 some of the specific ideas that I and others have  
17 expressed for how this process could be improved; I  
18 don't need to repeat them all today, but I hope this  
19 is the beginning of a very intense process of  
20 collaboration to solve issues which are simply  
21 essential if we're gonna have a more rational and  
22 efficient Parks innovation process. I will be voting  
23 aye.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK: Garodnick.



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2 COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: Thank you. I  
3 vote aye.  
4 COMMITTEE CLERK: Ignizio.  
5 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: I vote no on  
6 Miss Vauss and aye on all others.  
7 COMMITTEE CLERK: Speaker Mark-Viverito.  
8 SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO: I vote aye on  
9 all.  
10 COMMITTEE CLERK: All items have been  
11 adopted by a vote of 10 in the affirmative, 0 in the  
12 negative and no abstentions except for M 0225, which  
13 was adopted by a vote of 9 in the affirmative, 1 in  
14 the negative and 0 abstentions.  
15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Williams isn't here.  
16 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: He... [background  
17 comments] we'll hold the vote open for 15 minutes or  
18 until someone else needs the room.  
19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay.  
20 CHAIRPERSON LANDER: Alright, sir. Thank  
21 you.  
22 [background comments]  
23 COMMITTEE CLERK: Council Member  
24 Williams.  
25 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I vote aye.

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK: Final vote in the  
3 Committee on Rules, Privileges and Elections; all  
4 items have been adopted by a vote of 11 in the  
5 affirmative, 0 in the negative; no abstentions, with  
6 the exception of M 0225, which was adopted by a vote  
7 of 10 in the affirmative, 1 in the negative and 0  
8 abstentions.

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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 February 17, 2015