

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

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September 16, 2015
Start: 1:13 p.m.
Recess: 1:57 p.m.

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

B E F O R E:
JAMES G. VAN BRAMER
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Elizabeth S. Crowley
Julissa Ferreras-Copeland
Peter A. Koo
Stephen T. Levin
Andy L. King
Costa G. Constantinides
Laurie A. Cumbo
Helen K. Rosenthal
Paul A. Vallone

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

Joseph Rosenberg
Director
Catholic Community Relations Council
Archdiocese of New York and Brooklyn

Rosemarie Pace
Director
Pax Christi Metro New York

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3

2 [background comments]

3 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good afternoon
4 everyone and welcome to this very important hearing
5 and vote of the Committee on Cultural Affairs,
6 Libraries and International Intergroup Relations. We
7 are here this afternoon to take up a resolution,
8 Resolution 801-A; the prime sponsor, which is our
9 good friend and colleague, Council Paul Vallone and
10 this resolution is called in honor of the visit of
11 Pope Francis in less than two weeks and this
12 resolution praises Pope Francis for his lifelong
13 pursuit of peace among all peoples and commence him
14 on his upcoming historic visit to New York City.

15 I want to recognize the members of the
16 committee who are here and we'll hear from a couple
17 of folks, including the prime sponsor of the
18 resolution in a moment. But let me welcome Council
19 Member Costa Constantinides from Queens, Council
20 Member Julissa Ferreras from Queens, Council Member
21 Elizabeth Crowley from Queens, Council Member Paul
22 Vallone from Queens, Council Member Peter Koo from
23 Queens [background comments] and way over out on the
24 outskirts of the table here, Council Member Steve
25 Levin from Brooklyn. [background comments]

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2 [laughter] And we have a couple of folks who would
3 like to testify on the resolution before us, but I
4 know we have a number of colleagues who have a number
5 of hearings and events that they need to attend to,
6 but are anxious to vote on this resolution, so before
7 we hear some words from myself and Council Member
8 Vallone and any other council members who would like
9 to speak on the resolution, why don't we ask the
10 clerk to take a roll call vote before we hear some
11 words.

12 COMMITTEE CLERK: William Martin,
13 Committee Clerk, roll call vote Committee on Cultural
14 Affairs, Resolution 801-A. Chair Van Bramer.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I vote aye.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK: Levin.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I vote aye on this
18 resolution and I would request that my name be added
19 to the list of sponsors. Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE CLERK: Crowley.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: I vote aye and I
22 will also ask that my name be listed as a co-sponsor.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK: Ferreras-Copeland.
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2 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS-COPELAND: I
3 proudly vote aye and I think I am already a co-
4 sponsor.

5 COMMITTEE CLERK: You are.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS-COPELAND: Okay,
7 good. Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK: Koo.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: I vote aye and I
10 also want to request my name to be added to be a
11 sponsor.

12 COMMITTEE CLERK: Constantinides.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: I vote
14 aye and also I'd like to be added as a co-sponsor.
15 Thank you.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of 6 in the
17 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,
18 item has been adopted.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
20 much to my colleagues and now I wanna make a few
21 comments and I know Council Member Vallone will as
22 well and I wanna say that a lot of folks know that I
23 am one of six openly gay members of the New York City
24 Council and that I am also married to my husband Dan
25 Hendrick. Also, a lot of folks know that I am also

2 Catholic, baptized at St. Teresa's in Woodside and
3 made all of my other childhood sacraments at St.
4 Joe's in Astoria and there was a time in my life when
5 I thought I couldn't be both proudly gay and
6 Catholic, but I no longer feel that way and I'm proud
7 to say that Pope Francis and some of the actions and
8 words and messages that he has offered up in his
9 papacy has brought hope to me and I think hope to
10 millions of others throughout the world that it's
11 Pope Francis who will guide so many people in the
12 world to further understand the love and the dignity
13 inherent in every single person, including my LGBT
14 brothers and sisters.

15 So it's an enormous time for us and for
16 our city and I remember when I went to St. John's
17 University, itself one of the largest Catholic
18 universities in the country, I loved the Vincentian
19 mission, I love service, I love that about our church
20 and I love that Pope Francis is so dedicated to the
21 poor, to those who have so little and who is so
22 dedicated to peace and love all over the world.

23 And I will also say this, that when I was
24 a student at St. John's University I organized a gay
25 and lesbian student group and we were met with some

2 resistance at the time, but last year; actually,
3 earlier this year, an LGBT student group at that very
4 same university, St. John's University in Queens, was
5 recognized for the first time and I remember going to
6 their event, they invited me to their prom and I
7 spoke with administrators of St. John's and some
8 members of the clergy and there was the sense that
9 Pope Francis had indeed sent a message that was being
10 received all over the world and there was space being
11 created within the church for all of us who are LGBT
12 to be both LGBT and Catholic and proudly so.

13 So it is with great anticipation that we
14 await the Pope's visit with great excitement for all
15 that can and will be; there is certainly more to do
16 in terms of LGBT space within the church, but I am
17 hopeful and I think Pope Francis has brought so much
18 hope to all of us. And so it is in that spirit that
19 I am voting in favor of the resolution and supporting
20 it and I will be attending the mass at Madison Square
21 Garden, proudly so and I think my Irish Catholic
22 grandmother would be very proud.

23 So with that let me introduce Council
24 Member Paul Vallone, the prime sponsor of the
25 resolution, but before I do that, let me recognize

2 that we've been joined by Council Member Helen
3 Rosenthal and we have already started voting, so if
4 you would like to [background comment] vote.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Can I proudly
6 vote aye? Okay... [crosstalk]

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I believe you
8 just did.

9 [laughter]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you...
11 [crosstalk]

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
13 much.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So excited...
15 thank you all for bringing this resolution. I was
16 so... once I saw it, I was so pleased to jump on, so I
17 really wanna thank you for that leadership, both of
18 you. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
20 much, Council Member Rosenthal and now the prime
21 sponsor of the resolution, my friend, Council Member
22 Paul Vallone.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: You know what,
24 we're all prime sponsors on this one, Jimmy; I can't
25 tell you how many of our council members and our

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2 Speaker, when we brought up the idea, were so proud.
3 So thank you to our chair and our deputy majority
4 leader for your friendship and help and guiding this
5 through, because it is historic and I remember when I
6 was 7 and I held my father's hand at Shea Stadium
7 when Pope John Paul came and it was raining and we
8 took the 7 Train and went there and soon as he took
9 the stage the sun came out and I never forgot it...
10 already an emo... it was just one of those moments that
11 can inspire our children and a flock of people who
12 have faith, faith of any kind; that's why I'm glad
13 you gave that speech, 'cause faith is a wonderful
14 thing and Pope Francis has managed to reach everyone
15 and what feels like to me [sic] and something like
16 this from the most diverse and wonderful council to
17 embrace his visit and welcome him and have the
18 cardinal come and give an invocation for us sets a
19 wonderful welcoming tone and it's something I think
20 that's gonna really help heal a city that really
21 needs some healing, we all need some healing and it's
22 a wonderful way to start it off that we are unified
23 in saying yes to faith vin [sic] embraces and I think
24 the Pope has really taken steps to open his arms to
25 everyone and I haven't seen that. And Jimmy and I

2 were sharing stories about how difficult it is for
3 both of us, 'cause somehow we're never enough of
4 whatever we portray to be and as a Catholic growing
5 up, sometimes people want you to be more Catholic and
6 if you're someone that's trying to represent the LGBT
7 community and you get pushback and yet we stand
8 united when we fight for these and this is a
9 wonderful day. So I thank everyone for getting us to
10 here; the Speaker never hesitated; I thank her and
11 the staff for doing that, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Joe
12 Rosenberg is here in the back from the Archdiocese of
13 New York, Coey Overa [sp?], my Chief of Staff,
14 Jonathan Szott and Legislative Director and all my
15 council members. This holy visit will recognize, not
16 only his Holiness' influence over the 1.2 billion
17 Roman Catholics, but over so many people over the
18 world, this resolution praises Pope Francis for his
19 lifelong pursuit of peace among all people and
20 commends him on his historic trip just eight days
21 from now. Pope Francis began his papacy two years
22 ago and already he's made such an amazing impact on
23 how we all view society and religion. Pope Francis
24 has repeatedly demonstrated his commitment to helping
25 the poor, reconciliation, humility, social justice,

2 tolerance and peaceful coexistence among all
3 religions, amplified by his upcoming landmark visit
4 to our city. He will address the United Nations
5 General Assembly, appear at Madison Square Garden, at
6 Central Park, some prayer; children are so excited,
7 including mine. I was born and raised a Catholic,
8 went to Catholic schools, Jesuit universities;
9 remember the time we talked about with Shea Stadium
10 with my dad and this is a very personal and probably
11 proud moment for me as an elected official and as a
12 comrade with all my elected officials to do this and
13 we can welcome him with open arms and praise him for
14 the goodness and peace he shares with all of us at a
15 time when we so desperately need it, and hopefully
16 this will be a spark for all of us to continue that.
17 And thank you really again to my dear friend and our
18 deputy majority leader and the chair of the committee
19 for getting this in time because we had time
20 commitments, you know and the Council doesn't do
21 really things very fast and this was one of those
22 that once the Speaker and the deputy got together it
23 started to move. So thank you very, very much.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
25 much, Paul and like any good Catholic, I am not

2 delaying a resolution [laughter] for the Pope. So
3 Council Member Rosenthal; did you wanna say a few
4 words?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Yeah, I just
6 wanna say that you know this pope is unusual and what
7 he has to say resonates for me as somebody who cares
8 about what's happening in our world and on our
9 planet. His ability to connect on issues that are
10 current is extraordinary; here's a guy who's steeped
11 in history where his predecessors did not necessarily
12 open their eyes to the world around them and this
13 pope is able to do that. I am [background comment]
14 very... natural [background comment]... his ability to
15 think about climate change, in particular and to try
16 to influence what governments are doing with climate
17 change is unprecedented, I think and I think at the
18 end of the day will help move the needle for what
19 governments should be doing around protecting their
20 people from possible devastation; he does that
21 because it's happening now, he sees what's happening
22 in Vietnam or the small pacific islands or Morocco,
23 where people in these countries already have to
24 change their behavior because of climate change and
25 the fact that this pope can make it a current issue

2 and an important issue, I admire him for that. So
3 again... [interpose]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Refugees, right;
5 he's now tackled the refugees issue and I mean as the
6 world sometimes looks like things are collapsing on
7 itself, here's this bright light trying to bring us
8 forward so.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you very
10 much.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you,
12 Council Member Rosenthal and Council Member Vallone
13 and I think the Pope has inspired so many of us and I
14 think this visit will inspire us further and in going
15 over my Catholic resume before, I failed to mention
16 that my husband is also Catholic. So with that...
17 [interpose]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Deputy Leader
19 [sic]... so is mine.

20 [laughter]

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: There you go...

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I just wanna
23 say...

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2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I knew we had a
3 lot in common Council Member Rosenthal [background
4 comments, laughter]... [crosstalk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: There we go.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: With that I
7 wanna call up two very important speakers on the
8 resolution, who will come up together; Rosemarie
9 Pace, Pax Christi and Joseph Rosenberg, Catholic
10 Community Relations Council. If both of you would
11 take a seat over there on the left and begin your
12 testimony in the order that you so choose.

13 [background comment] Thank you.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Excuse me,
15 Mr. Chair; just for the record I wanna point out that
16 in fact you are majority leader; not deputy leader
17 [sic].

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
19 much, Council Member Levin, but I appreciate the
20 correction.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Just for the
22 record.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.
24 Thank you. [background comment] Who would like to
25 go first?

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2 JOSEPH ROSENBERG: I would, if it's okay
3 with you, Mr. Chair... [crosstalk]

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely.

5 JOSEPH ROSENBERG: 'Kay, thank you.

6 Good afternoon Chair Van Bramer and
7 Council Member Vallone and members of the City
8 Council Committee on Cultural Affairs.

9 I'm Joseph Rosenberg, Director of the
10 Catholic Community Relations Council; I represent the
11 Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn
12 on local legislative and policy issues and I am
13 pleased to be before you today in strong support of
14 Resolution 801-A, praising Pope Francis for his
15 lifelong pursuit of peace among all peoples and
16 commending him on his historic visit to New York City
17 next week.

18 We are thankful to Speaker Mark-Viverito,
19 Council Member Paul Vallone, Council Chair Van Bramer
20 and all the sponsors of this resolution for their
21 initiative and interest in officially honoring Pope
22 Francis on this historic trip to New York City.

23 The goal of the Pope's visit to the
24 United States is the World Meeting of Families in
25 Philadelphia, but before going there he will stop in

2 Cuba, Washington, D.C. and New York City. Although
3 his time in New York City will consist of only 36
4 hours, his schedule is of a whirlwind nature,
5 focusing on many of the causes that he has focused
6 upon throughout the decades and especially during his
7 last two-and-a-half years since assuming the office
8 as the successor of Saint Peter in 2013.

9 The places Pope Francis will visit were
10 chosen by him and him alone. In addition to vespers
11 at St. Patrick's Cathedral and a mass for 20,000
12 people at Madison Square Garden, he will address the
13 General Assembly of the United Nations, make a
14 prayerful visit to the 9/11 Memorial and then
15 participate in an interreligious service with the
16 leading representatives of many faiths at the 9/11
17 Memorial and Museum. Pope Francis will visit a 3rd
18 grade classroom at our Lady Queen of Angels School in
19 East Harlem where he will spend time with 3rd and 4th
20 grade students and principals from four Harlem
21 schools and will be greeted outside the school by
22 hundreds of students representing over 200 Catholic
23 schools. He will then meet with hundreds of
24 immigrants and refugees mostly from Honduras and El
25 Salvador and other countries throughout the world

2 that have been helped by Catholic Charities,
3 including unaccompanied immigrant minors whose
4 welfare has been a longstanding and absolute priority
5 of Catholic Charities, both of the Archdiocese of New
6 York and the Diocese of Brooklyn and who have
7 benefited in so many ways from being a major focus of
8 your far-reaching legislative and funding
9 initiatives. Much has been written about what people
10 are calling "The Francis effect". In the words of
11 Cardinal Dolan, the Pope's sincerity, warmth,
12 simplicity, joy and humility have captivated a world
13 and although many are seeking a worldly message from
14 Pope Francis; quoting again from Cardinal Dolan, "He
15 is not coming as a politician, an economist, a
16 scientist, an ethicist, a social commentator; Pope
17 Francis will come as a pastor, an evangelist, an
18 apostle."

19 The Archdiocese of New York and the
20 Diocese of Brooklyn are pleased that the New York
21 City Council is part of this warm welcome. Thank you
22 very much.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.
24 Rosemarie.

2 ROSEMARIE PACE: First I want to
3 acknowledge... Is this on?

4 [background comments]

5 ROSEMARIE PACE: Where's the turn-on...

6 [background comment] Okay. This is a new experience

7 for me and so I didn't really understand frankly why

8 I was invited, in the sense that I didn't know the

9 vote was going to happen before I spoke. So I've

10 really... what I just handed to all of you is kind of,

11 if you will, an argument in favor of the resolution,

12 but more to kind of persuade, to influence, so it's

13 of a little bit different nature perhaps than was

14 needed, I guess I could say. But thank you all,

15 council people for this opportunity to give testimony

16 in support of Resolution 801-A, praising Pope Francis

17 for his lifelong pursuit of peace among all peoples

18 and commending him on his upcoming visit to New York

19 City.

20 I'm Rosemarie Pace, Director of Pax

21 Christi Metro New York, a regional chapter of the

22 International Catholic peace movement. It is my

23 honor to affirm this resolution unconditionally. The

24 resolution eloquently recognizes many of the reasons

25 I could only reiterate to encourage passage of it,

2 but there is even more than can be said. For example
3 -- and these are actually taken from the resolution
4 -- not only has Pope Francis been a ceaseless
5 advocate for the poor and a staunch critic of
6 economic inequality; he has also been quite clear in
7 connecting poverty with conflict. Accordingly, he
8 has stated unequivocally that when some people are
9 allowed to suffer from lack of basic necessities; not
10 just luxuries, we have planted the seeds for revolt.
11 Conversely, conflicts help create poverty where there
12 was none. Not only did Pope Francis invite President
13 Peres and Abbas to meet and pray together; he has
14 appealed for an end to the violence with which
15 Palestinians, especially Christian Palestinians are
16 forced to live under occupation. Similarly, he has
17 expressed compassion for innocent Israeli civilians
18 who may live in fear of retaliatory violence.

19 Not only has Pope Francis denounced the
20 violence in Iraq and Syria and prayed for peace
21 there; he called all people of faith to join him in a
22 day of prayerful solidarity that many of us believe
23 is what avoided all out war by the U.S. and western
24 allies in the region. Similarly, he has opposed

2 military interventions in every other part of the
3 world where there is violent conflict.

4 Pope Francis was a clear catalyst in the
5 reopening of relations between the U.S. and Cuba,
6 reversing decades of ineffective embargo and choosing
7 dialogue instead.

8 In his recent encyclical *Laudato Si*, "On
9 Care for Our Common Home," Pope Francis again makes
10 the connection, referring to integral ecology; he
11 articulately illustrates the links among the
12 environment, economics, politics and peace. He says
13 throughout the document that we cannot protect
14 creation if we do not protect one another from
15 economic exploitation, political power play and war;
16 each feeds or starves the others.

17 In addition, Pope Francis has called for
18 the abolition of nuclear weapons -- not mentioned in
19 the resolution; one of the greatest threats to our
20 earthly existence, he joins countless others in
21 supporting the Iran deal which promotes diplomacy
22 over nuclear weapons proliferation and the risk of
23 nuclear holocaust.

24 In every possible way on every possible
25 issue, Pope Francis is an informed voice for which I

2 might call integral peace, a peace that is not just
3 the absence of war, but also the triumph of justice
4 for all people and all of god's creation. Just last
5 week at an international meeting called "Peace is
6 Always Possible, Religions and Cultures in Dialogue,"
7 organized by the Community of Sant'Egidio in
8 cooperation with the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of
9 Albania and the Albanian Episcopal Conference held in
10 Tirana, Albania, Pope Francis issued this message:
11 "It is necessary to reaffirm that peace is always
12 possible; we must never be resigned to war and we
13 must not be indifferent in front of people who suffer
14 from war and violence. To state that peace is always
15 possible is not naiveté; we are required to be
16 involved personally and through our communities in
17 the great work of peace."

18 And so I'll change my last paragraph to
19 say I thank the Committee on Cultural Affairs,
20 Libraries and International Intergroup Relations for
21 approving this resolution as a most well-deserved
22 welcome to Pope Francis to our wonderful city. Thank
23 you.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
25 much to both of you for your testimony and sometimes

2 we need testimony that convinces Council Members to
3 support a piece of legislation or a resolution; in
4 this case it was so overwhelming that that wasn't
5 necessary, but your testimony and your support is
6 welcomed and we're thrilled that you both would come
7 today to the City Council. I know Council Member
8 Vallone probably would like to offer a closing
9 remark.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: I just
11 personally wanna say thank you for your help and
12 support and obviously it takes a lot to come down and
13 I'm glad this was your first one and I can't think of
14 a better reason to come down and testify for the
15 Council, so that's great and I'm glad you... I hope you
16 remember this... [background comment] there's always...
17 yeah, there will be another great one too. And Joe,
18 thank you for your guidance throughout the process
19 and again, Majority Leader, thank you so much and
20 Council Members; this will make all of us shine a
21 little brighter at our Stated hearing, when we're
22 able to have this ready for him and signed by
23 everyone, so thank you so much.

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2 JOSEPH ROSENBERG: And I'd just like to
3 add something. Thank you, all of you; your words
4 were beautiful and tremendously appreciated.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you,
6 Council Member Vallone for bringing this to us and I
7 wanna... as Council Member Vallone already did,
8 recognize Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, who very
9 much wanted this happen as well and supports it. And
10 thank you to our committee members; we're gonna hold
11 open the vote for another 15 minutes or so for a
12 couple of members of the committee who are not yet
13 here, but the resolution has already passed out of
14 the committee and goes to the Full Council tomorrow
15 for a vote.

16 With that I thank you for your testimony
17 and I look forward to seeing you over a very busy 36
18 hours for the City of New York next week. Thank you
19 very much and this hearing is adjourned.

20 [gavel]

21 COMMITTEE CLERK: Continuation of roll
22 call, Committee on Cultural Affairs. Council Member
23 Cumbo.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I vote aye on
25 Resolution praising Pope Francis for his lifelong

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2 pursuit of peace among all people and commence him on
3 his upcoming historic visit to New York City.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK: Final vote now,
5 Committee on Cultural Affairs is 7 in the
6 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions.

7 [pause]

8 COMMITTEE CLERK: Continuation, Committee
9 on Cultural Affairs, Resolution 801-A, Council Member
10 King.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Yes.

12 COMMITTEE CLERK: Final and revised vote
13 for the Committee on Cultural Affairs now stands at 9
14 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative and no
15 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 September 17, 2015