

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

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October 17, 2018
Start: 11:40 a.m.
Recess: 12:34 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: KAREN KOSLOWITZ
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Adrienne E. Adams
Margaret S. Chin
Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.
Rafael L. Espinal, Jr.
Vanessa L. Gibson
Corey D. Johnson
Rory I. Lancman
Steven Matteo
Ritchie J. Torres
Mark Treyger

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

2 [sound check] [pause]

3 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Good morning and
4 welcome to the Committee on Rules, Privileges and
5 Elections. My name is Karen Koslowitz, and I am the
6 Chair of the Committee on Rules, Privileges and
7 Elections. Before we begin, I would like to
8 introduce the member of this Rules Committee present.
9 First, we are honored to be joined by—Well, no we're
10 not. He's not here yet. [laughter] I want to
11 introduce Minority Leader Steve Matteo, Council
12 Member Adrienne Adams, Council Member Margaret Chin,
13 Council Member Mark Treyger, Council Member Margaret—
14 I said Margaret Chin already, and as we go along,
15 we'll be joined by other members of the committee.
16 And before we begin, I want to introduce the staff of
17 the Council to the Committee and the staff. I would
18 like to acknowledge Elizabeth Guzman, who's the
19 Counsel to this committee. I would also like to
20 acknowledge the staff members from the Council's
21 Investigative Units: Chuck Davis, Chief of Compliance
22 Officer, and Andre Johnson Brown. First, we will
23 consider and vote on the nomination by the Mayor of
24 Mr. Steven Kest for appointment to the New York City
25 Taxi and Limousine Commission. We will then consider

2 and vote on the nomination by the Queensborough
3 President of Mr.— Now, I never called you by this
4 name. I know you very well Oudeshram Raj Rampershad
5 for appointment as a member of the New York City
6 Planning Commission. In New York City Taxi and
7 Limousine Commission known as the TLC was created
8 pursuant to Local Law 12 of 1971. Chapter 65 of the
9 New York City Charter establishes the TLC with the
10 goal of developing and improving Taxi and Limousine
11 service in New York City. TLC is responsible for
12 overall transportation policy. The Commission
13 establishes certain rates, standards and criteria for
14 the licensing of vehicles, drivers, chauffeurs,
15 owners and operators. The Commission includes nine
16 members appointed by the Mayor with the advice and
17 consent of the Council. TLC must include at least
18 one member from each borough. TLC members are
19 appointed for a terms of seven years, and can serve
20 until the appointment and qualifications of a
21 successor. [coughs] The Mayor designates one TLC
22 member to act as the Chair and Chief Executive
23 Officer. The Chair has the power to employ, assign
24 and oversee the officers and employees of the
25 organization. Pursuant to the Charter, the Chair's

2 position is full time and the Mayor sets
3 compensation. The Chair currently receives \$212,044
4 annually. No other TLC member receives compensation.
5 Should all TLC and all documents and records in its
6 possession are public records. TLC must also submit
7 and annual report to the Council on or before the
8 second Monday of January. Should candidate Kest be
9 appointed to the TLC, he will fill a vacancy and
10 serve for the remainder of the seven-year term that
11 expires on January 31, 2019. Can we swear in Mr.
12 Kest, please?

13 LEGAL COUNSEL GUZMAN: Welcome, Mr. Kest.
14 Would you please raise your right hand to be sworn in?
15 Do you swear or affirm to tell the whole truth and
16 nothing but the truth during this testimony?

17 STEVEN KEST: [off mic] I do.

18 LEGAL COUNSEL GUZMAN: Thank you. Do you
19 have a statement you would wish to make?

20 STEVEN KEST: [off mic] Yes, I do. Good
21 morning. [pause]

22 MALE SPEAKER: There you go.

23 STEVEN KEST: Alright, thank you and
24 members of the Committee on Rules, Privileges and
25 Elections. My name is Steven Kest, and I'm grateful

2 to Mayor de Blasio for nominating me to serve as a
3 member of the Taxi and Limousine Commission. The
4 primary reason that I want to serve on the TLC is
5 because I want to be an advocate for the drivers
6 whether they drive yellow cabs, green cabs or for-
7 hire vehicles, the drivers work hard. They don't get
8 paid enough. Their expenses are too high, and they
9 deserve a TLC that's looking out for their interests.
10 I know the TLC has to balance the sometime competing
11 interests of all residents of the city not just driver
12 but also riders and the general public. I'm
13 confident that I'll be sensitive for the variety of
14 constituencies, that the TLC is responsible to, but I
15 firmly believe that in the long run the entire city
16 is better served if we have well compensated, stable
17 and professional core of drivers. My entire career has
18 prepared me for this appointment. For over 35 years
19 I worked as a community organizer with ACORN, the
20 foremost organization of poor and working people in
21 the county. At ACORN I helped organize people so
22 they had power to win a better life. ACORN is the
23 leading national organization in fighting for living
24 wages for workers. We also led the fight against
25 abusive and predatory lenders. Both of these

2 campaign areas relevant to my perspective position at
3 the TLC. After ACORN, I joined the staff of the
4 Service Employees International Union, and for five
5 years, I helped lead the Fight for 15, a national
6 campaign of fast food cooks and cashiers who helped
7 win wages of \$15 an hour for millions of workers all
8 across the country. I'm currently work as a senior
9 advisor at the Center for Popular Democracy where I
10 helped train and support community organizations in
11 35 states. Here in New York City CPDs, affiliates
12 and partners include the Working Families Party, Make
13 the Road New York, New York Communities for Change,
14 Vocal and Churches United for Fair Housing, all
15 organizations that are working to advance the
16 interests of low and moderate income New Yorker. My
17 firm belief is that Taxi, FHV drivers and commuter
18 vans like all workers—drivers—like all workers are
19 best served by organizing. My pledge to you as a
20 prospective TLC member is that I'll listen closely to
21 the voices of the drivers as it is expressed through
22 their organizations like the Taxi Workers Alliance
23 and the Independent Driver Guild along with any other
24 organizations the drivers organize and support. In
25 particular I plan to study the proposals that have

2 been put forth by the TLC and by members of this
3 Council that are designed to raise wages for the
4 drivers. At first glance these proposals represent
5 significant advances, and as I learn more about them
6 and about the concerns of the drivers, I hope I'll be
7 a constructive advocate as these policies are
8 finalized. In conclusion, let me say that I'm
9 honored that the Mayor has nominated me to serve on
10 the Commission, and I look forward to working closely
11 with members of the Council in that capacity. I'd be
12 happy to answer any of your questions.

13 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: what safeguards
14 would you recommend to ensure that dishonest taxi
15 drivers do not overcharge riders?

16 STEVEN KEST: That's one of the areas
17 that I've heard about, and I hope to look into it and
18 learn more about it once I get on the Commission, but
19 that seems an important issue to address.
20 Absolutely.

21 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Because I know.
22 I take—I take cabs. I do not drive--

23 STEVEN KEST: [interposing] Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: --and many times
25 I've gotten into a cab where they don't even put down

2 the meter. They, you know, tell me—they'll say to me
3 how much—how much does the ride usually cost? And,
4 you know, I will tell them, and I happen to be honest
5 and I tell them exactly because I take cabs a lot,
6 but that money gets put into their pockets. They
7 don't have to report that money because there's no
8 record of--

9 STEVEN KEST: [interposing] Uh-hm.

10 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: --having a
11 passenger. How—how can you address this on a whole
12 with, you know, with the rest of the Commissioners?

13 STEVEN KEST: Yeah. No, that seems like
14 an important issue address [coughing] and I—I know
15 that there's an Enforcement Division at the TLC and
16 I will definitely be focused on issues like that.

17 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Okay. Also the
18 taxi industry is, you know, facing some really tough
19 financial times at this point, and they're missing
20 payments on their loans, and some have even ended
21 their lives because of their financial troubles.
22 What can the TLC or the city do to alleviate some of
23 the financial burdens medalion owners face?

24 STEVEN KEST: Yeah, I know this—it's been
25 a tragic, tragic situation. I mean, look, I—I've

2 spent all of my life as a organizer working to
3 advance the interests of poor people and working
4 families, and I think that's why I want to serve on
5 the Commission so I can really sort of dig into those
6 issues, and help craft policies that will address
7 exactly the problems that you're raising. So, that's
8 why I want to take on this responsibility.

9 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: I know that
10 that's fair to make sure that the, you know, the
11 people have--feel that they can come and speak to, you
12 know, the commissioners at, you know, the times of--of
13 need and maybe get some advice from them--

14 STEVEN KEST: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: --and not feel so
16 alone.

17 STEVEN KEST: No, I think absolutely that
18 seems right. Yep.

19 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Okay, any of my
20 colleagues have any--what? [background comments,
21 pause] Council Member Chin.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you, Madam
23 Chair. Mr. Check--Kest--

24 STEVEN KEST: [interposing] Yes.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: --welcome.

2 STEVEN KEST: Thank you.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Looking at your
4 background and from your testimony I'm really excited
5 that you joined the TLC that we have another activist
6 voice on there, and from my own personal experience
7 in terms with interacting with the--the Chairperson
8 and TLC on the commuter van issue, and I agree with
9 you that organizing is really crucial. We were able
10 to organize the community van--commuter van operators
11 who were operating legally, but--and TLC was pushing
12 for this decal to show that these are the official
13 legal vans that have insurance, and provide the
14 safety, and because they were able to come into TLC
15 and sit down with TLC staff and the--the Chair, that
16 they were able to work together. And they were also
17 very excited to let the customer know that these are
18 the safe ones--

19 STEVEN KEST: [interposing] Yeah.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: --and these are the
21 ones that you should be riding, and they were able to
22 work with us to get an official commuter stop. So, I
23 really look forward to seeing more of that
24 interaction. You know as the Commissioner hopefully
25 you will be proactive and work with Council Member if

2 we have situations that we wanted to reach out to
3 you, but also I think looking at the—the issues with
4 the drivers especially taxi drivers I myself also
5 take cabs whenever I need. But what happened, you
6 know, with the app with Uber and—and all the app,
7 what I've seen is a lot more issues with congestions,
8 and granted, it's very convenient for the customers,
9 but it really hurts I think the taxi industry because
10 you have to-- Most of the time you could get a cab
11 in Lower Manhattan easily just get on any corner and
12 you can get one, but unfortunately, there are people
13 who want the service right in front of their doors or
14 drop them off right in front of their office, and
15 that really causes a lot of issue. But I think that—
16 I hope that you will, you know, work with
17 organizations, you know, like Taxi Workers Alliance
18 and with us in the Council to find a way to help
19 these drivers make a decent living, and to be able to
20 continue to work in our city.

21 STEVEN KEST: Great. Thank you. I
22 promise I will, and I live in Brooklyn not far from
23 Flatbush Avenue. So, I'm—I've ridden the dollar
24 vans, the commuter vans, and I'm familiar with those

2 issues as well. So, look forward to working with
3 you.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So, with the dollar
5 van we have to find a way to help them legalize. I
6 mean like even in Chinatown we have the legal one,
7 and the illegal ones. So, we got to really help
8 them.

9 STEVEN KEST: Yep.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: If you want to make
11 a living, follow the rules and we will help you.

12 STEVEN KEST: Yep.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you. Thank
14 you Chair.

15 STEVEN KEST: Yep. Thanks.

16 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Okay. Council
17 Member Treyger.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you.
19 Thank you, Chair Koslowitz and congratulations Mr.
20 Kest on your nomination.

21 STEVEN KEST: Thank you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I—I really
23 appreciate your attention and focus on making, you
24 know, on the livelihood of the drivers and making
25 sure that we're sympathetic and empathetic to their

2 challenges that they're going through. Recently the
3 City Council voted on a contentious piece of
4 legislation with regards to—whether you call it
5 capping or pausing for your—for-hire vehicle licenses
6 to deal with this issue of congestion and come up
7 with regulations and ideas on how to better deal with
8 it, but one of the things that—that has—that came out
9 of the legislation was really this creation of a new
10 office or a new area of focus with regards to dealing
11 with the fact that historically, and—and we still
12 hear cases today where particularly people of color
13 are being denied service. In—in this day and age
14 it's just unacceptable, and so I—it is our hope and
15 expectation that this new office that was created as
16 a result of this legislation is given all the support
17 and the attention that it deserves to make sure that
18 this just does not happen any more. So, that's first
19 and foremost. The other issue that I just want to
20 bring to your attention, and you're from Brooklyn, I—
21 I heard, so am I. There are times when we have been
22 denied service if we're in Manhattan asking for a
23 trip to Brooklyn and we're told no and get out of the
24 car.

25 STEVEN KEST: Yes.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: So, you know,
3 this just--this should not be happening, and so as we
4 first and foremost, you know, are sympathetic and
5 empathetic to the challenges, significant challenges,
6 which they face, they would be better served with the
7 public if they truly can every single day practice
8 that type of equity and fairness and--and basic
9 decency to everyone in New York City, and I think
10 it's worth emphasizing particularly when we're
11 considering a nomination to a new Commissioner on--on
12 TLC. This legislation will be reviewed within a
13 year, and we'll probably circle back with TLC about
14 what new ideas and proposals will happen, but there
15 are some of the issues that came up during this
16 contentious legislation. I would like to hear your
17 thoughts on them and again, I congratulate you on
18 your nomination.

19 STEVEN KEST: Great. Yeah, thank you.
20 Yeah, I totally agree. I mean there is no place for
21 that type of discrimination in any sector and, you
22 know, I spent all of my career fighting those types
23 of abuse whether it was by--by bankers denying loans
24 to people of color or landlords denying leases, et
25 cetera. So, I'm absolutely sensitive to those

2 issues, and—and that is one of the things that I
3 certainly agree with you and need to address.

4 [pause]

5 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Council Member
6 Treyger are you finished.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: [off mic] Yes,
8 Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Okay. Council
10 Member Lancman.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: Good morning.

12 STEVEN KEST: Good morning.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: I was very
14 excited to hear about your nomination. It's—you're
15 going to have lots of issues to deal with as a member
16 of the—the TLC, and the issues that are raised by my
17 colleagues are all very important, and—and I know
18 you're going to do the right thing. I do hope that
19 you—you take as your mandate on the TLC that the
20 mission to make the lives of drivers better. I hope
21 that you will work with the Taxi Workers Alliance
22 and—and with others, and make that a focus of your
23 tenure. I and all my colleagues do represent many
24 fore-hire vehicle workers. Almost all of them who
25 are—of whom are—are immigrants, and it's so important

2 that there be someone on the TLC who comes to those
3 meetings and those hearings and those conversations
4 with that mission and that sensitivity, and I hope
5 you will be that person, and I hope you'll do all the
6 right things on all the other issues as well, but I
7 want you sitting at that table conscious that that's
8 why you're there. Yeah, I'd vote for that. (sic)

9 STEVEN KEST: I appreciate that, Council
10 Member and that is—that will be my mission. So,
11 thanks.

12 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Council Member
13 Adams.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Yes, I will also
15 echo the sentiments of my colleagues as well and
16 congratulations on your appointment. As one who
17 represents Southeast Queens and the numerous for-hire
18 vehicles, and drivers, Yellow cabs in particular,
19 there is a heart felt need for someone of your
20 caliber and character to join the TLC. So, as my
21 colleagues have said, we really, really do hope that
22 you are that breath of fresh air of sensitivity that
23 is needed on the TLC. We congratulate you for the
24 appointment, and we really, really hope that you will
25 be the voice for the voiceless out there. Thank you.

2 STEVEN KEST: Thank you, Council Member
3 and really I—any advice or suggestions you have for
4 me for all of you, just, you know, feel—feel free to
5 reach out.

6 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: I just want to
7 note that we've been joined by Council Member Vanessa
8 Gibson. Alright, I think we'll call for a vote on
9 Mr. Kest. [background comments]

10 CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk,
11 roll call vote Committee on Rules [coughs] on Kest.
12 Chair Koslowitz.

13 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Aye.

14 CLERK: Gibson.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Congratulations.
16 Looking forward to working with you. I vote aye.

17 STEVEN KEST: Thank you.

18 CLERK: Chin.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Aye.

20 CLERK: Lancman.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: Aye.

22 CLERK: Treyger.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Aye.

24 CLERK: Adams.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: I vote aye.

2 CLERK: By a vote of 6 in the
3 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstention, the
4 item has been adopted by the committee.

5 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Congratulations.

6 STEVEN KEST: Thank you very much. Okay,
7 thanks. [background comments]

8 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Now we will turn
9 to the nomination of Mr. Rampershad to the New York
10 City Planning Commission. I know Mr. Rampershad--as
11 I call him Raj--for many years, and--[background
12 comments] Alright. We're just going to have Council
13 Member Matteo vote.

14 CLERK: [interposing] Appointment for Mr.
15 Kest, continuation roll call, Council Member Matteo.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: No.

17 CLERK: The vote now stands at 6 in the
18 affirmative, and 1 in the negative.

19 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: I know Mr.
20 Rampershad for many years. I've worked very closely
21 with him when he was the Chair of Community Board 9,
22 and he has done our community justice, and I know
23 that he will do the same on City Planning. I have
24 Board 9 in my district. I have a nice piece of it,
25 and I believe Council Member Adams also has Board 9

2 in the district. So, I look forward to working with
3 you in another capacity.

4 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: And now pursuant
6 to the New York City Charter the Planning Commission
7 must consist of 13 members. The Mayor appoints seven
8 members including the appointment of Commissioner
9 Chair, the Public Advocate appoints one, and each of
10 the five borough presidents appoints one. [door
11 bangs] with the exception of the Commission Chair.
12 Appointments to the Planning Commission are subject
13 to the advice and consent of the Council. Planning
14 Commission members serve for staggered five-year
15 terms and may serve an unlimited number of terms.
16 The Chair receives an annual salary of \$214,413. The
17 Vice Chair a salary of \$65,121 and members a salary
18 of \$54,150. Planning Commission members have several
19 responsibilities including city planning for future
20 developments, assisting the Mayor in developing
21 capital programs, overseeing environmental reviews,
22 preparing zoning and planning reports. Should
23 candidate Rampershad be appointed to the Planning
24 Commission, he will fill a vacancy and serve the
25 remainder of a five-year term expiring June 30, 2023.

2 Mr. Rampershad, please confirm on the record that you
3 will abide by the Conflicts of Interest Board
4 Guidance provide to you, and should you be appointed,
5 you will resign from Community Board 9.

6 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: Yes. Should I swear him
7 first or--?

8 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: You will resign
9 Community Board 9?

10 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: Yes, I will.

11 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Okay, raise your
12 right hand and let's swear you in.

13 LEGAL COUNSEL GUZMAN: Do you swear or
14 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth during the
15 testimony you're about to give.

16 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: I do.

17 LEGAL COUNSEL GUZMAN: Thank you, and can
18 you restate you're stepping down from the Community
19 Board 9?

20 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: Yes, I will resign from
21 the Community Board right after the vote is taken. I
22 already prepared the email [laughs] so--

23 LEGAL COUNSEL GUZMAN: Right, thank you.
24 Do you have a statement you wish to make?

25 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: Yes, I do

2 LEGAL COUNSEL GUZMAN: Thank you. Please
3 proceed.

4 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: Good morning Chairperson
5 Koslowitz and members of the Committee on Rules,
6 Privileges and Elections. My name is Oudeshram
7 Rampershad, but everyone calls me Raj. I would first
8 like to thank Queensborough President Melinda Katz
9 for nominating me for this position, and thank you
10 all for allowing me to testify before you today. I
11 would also like to take a moment and acknowledge the
12 late Irwin Cantor who served for 23 years in the
13 position for which I have been nominated. If I'm
14 confirmed, I will do everything in my power to
15 maintain the respect, the integrity and the tenacity
16 that Mr. Cantor brought to the position. I've been a
17 life long resident of Richmond Hill, Queens, and it
18 would be a distinct privilege to represent my borough
19 on the City Planning Commission. My parents migrated
20 here from Guyana. My father came in 1969 and my mom
21 came in 1971. They had two children, my brother and
22 me. Like so many people before them, they came here
23 to live the American Dream. My dad worked for
24 Liberty Line Buses. He went to RCA Technical School
25 and served in the United States Air Force stationed

2 in Sumter, South Carolina. My mom also worked
3 several jobs for a time at a department store and
4 then at Key Food Supermarkets where she went from
5 being a cashier to a supervisor. Eventually, with
6 her partner she opened up a meat and grocery business
7 in Losen Park, Queens. It was our family business.
8 I started working there when I was about 14 years old
9 and I did everything from mopping floors, working the
10 counters, manning the register, doing deliveries. I
11 worked there for 23 years, and in that time I grew to
12 appreciate the kindness and loyalty of the community,
13 the value of hard work, and the ups and downs of
14 keeping the business afloat. Serving on the City
15 Planning Commission would be the honor of my 18-year
16 career in the architectural field. I studied
17 architecture at New York City Technical College in
18 Downtown Brooklyn where I received my Associates
19 Degree in Architectural Technology. I went on to
20 Pratt Institute where I earned my Bachelor's Degree
21 in Architecture and graduated with honors. In 2001 I
22 began working for JLJ Kelly (sic) and their
23 architect. At the firm, I learned zoning and code
24 analysis, have regularly worked on projects with
25 countless city agencies and closely followed zoning

2 and building code changes over 18 years. This
3 practical experience will benefit me as a
4 Commissioner. Public service is also deeply
5 important in my family. My older brother who passed
6 away at the 34 was a New York City Police Officer
7 having worked nine years and the 39th Precinct in
8 Bedford-Stuyvesant working midnight tours, and then
9 later as a sergeant out of the 43rd Precinct in the
10 Bronx. My passion for the community I live in took
11 the form of community board service. I applied in
12 2005 and was appointed by then the late Helen—the
13 late Helen Marshall to Queens Community Board 9,
14 which covers the areas of Richmond Hill, Ozone Park,
15 Kew Gardens, and Woodhaven. I immediately joined the
16 Land Use Committee and served there ever since. Over
17 my 13 years of experience on CB9 including three
18 years as Chair of the Board not only have I gained
19 experience working closely on major land use matters
20 affecting our communities during that time, but also
21 developed a deep appreciation for the importance of
22 conducting city business in a transparent,
23 respectful, consistent and open-minded manner both
24 with fellow board members and with the public. These
25 are the values I will continue to uphold on the City

2 Planning Commission. Finally, I want to state for
3 the record that I will follow all guidance issued by
4 the Conflicts of Interest Board regarding my
5 potential appointment. In particular, the potential
6 owner of my firm has stated I will not be assigned
7 any work or project that may appear before the CPC or
8 BSA, and I will recuse myself from any such projects
9 moving forward. I also plan to resign from Queens
10 Community Board 9 if confirmed to this position. In
11 conclusion, I am truly honored to have been nominated
12 to serve on the City Planning Commission, and I thank
13 you all very much for considering my appointment.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you. Okay,
16 hat are your thoughts on public-private partnerships
17 for land use, planning and development in our great
18 city, and do you see opportunities for growing these
19 types of relations in the future?

20 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: For me, I believe the-
21 the public view and-and the process is very
22 important. From the community board-community
23 boards' point of view, I always thought it was
24 important. Whenever something came up, it was
25 announced at CPC that it was-that we needed to get it

2 out to the public that I would always make sure that
3 the -that Land Use Chair and myself we made sure we
4 reached out to all the local civics, and even with
5 the residents that attend like the 102 Council and so
6 forth to make sure that they're aware of what's going
7 on, and I think the more informed they are, the
8 better the process can be, and I would ensure that,
9 you know, weighing every decision that I make sure I
10 look at—make sure the Community weighed in on issues
11 besides the City Council and, you know, go from
12 there.

13 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: I can attest to
14 that.

15 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: As a member of
17 the Planning Commission, how would you begin to
18 address our affordable housing crisis? Would you
19 call for substantially higher density to achieve
20 affordable housing growth?

21 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: I think that we've got
22 to look at—every—every community is different, and
23 speaking from the Richmond Hill point of view from—
24 from what I saw in our last rezoning, we had Jamaica
25 Avenue, which was upzoned. It was a lower—it was a

2 C2-3 and R6B, and I'm sorry if I'm pulling out the
3 zoning, but to me I thought that it was great that it
4 was upzoned because it was a commercial thoroughfare
5 the entire district, and it would help promote
6 businesses, and the other good thing about that
7 particular location was that at least the transit
8 system was there. So, it gave people an opportunity
9 if there was development within that area, people
10 would be able to use mass transit to get around, but
11 I think you have to approach every community
12 differently, take in regards to how the
13 infrastructure around them is, and, you know, and
14 you—you try to stay—you try—I would think you would
15 stay within the character of the community, and not
16 like, you know, just drop not a ridiculous zone, but
17 put a zone that does not apply to that area. So, I
18 mean I can go on all day. [laughs] I'm a little
19 nervous.

20 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Does anyone have
21 any questions? No questions. Margaret.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Good morning.

23 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: Good morning.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: It's really good to
25 have a community board chair, and a—and also with

2 your community board experience to be on the City
3 Planning. I just came from a hearing this morning at
4 the City Planning Commission fighting for my
5 community, and I was looking—I was reading some of
6 your—your response to the—the question. Can you
7 elaborate a little bit more on in terms of
8 understanding the impacts on a community not just in
9 the immediate, but also in the future where there are
10 development decisions that are being made?

11 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: A great question. You
12 know, speaking from a community board standpoint when
13 I saw our areas get rezoned Kew Gardens and in
14 Richmond Hill, it, you know, like for example they
15 took an area that was a lower density R4 or 5 and
16 made it R7. That was a big thing for developers
17 because they started taking down one and two-family
18 houses and started building apartment houses. The
19 parking got waived. So, the problem there was there
20 was not enough parking for the residents living
21 there. But I think when you do major developments
22 like this there's a major impact and I—and I always
23 get concerned about the emergency services like the
24 Police Department, Fire Department, Schools and, you
25 know, there's already a—I felt like the

2 infrastructure was already overburdened with the
3 transit and sewer systems. So, whenever I see major
4 developments, I always think about that first what
5 kind of impact that's going to have that, and also as
6 well as on the residents. So, for me, using Kew
7 Gardens as an example because there's a lot of
8 development going on right there right now, and-we're
9 talking major developments of, you know, 10 families,
10 20 families even 30 family-unit apartment buildings
11 that where traditionally, it was one and two-family
12 homes. And, you know, the residents—because I took
13 the brunt of it at the—at the community board
14 meetings, were very upset about it. They're building
15 out of the character of the neighborhood. Why did
16 you let this happen? And, you know, I would hope in
17 the future that, you know, when rezonings are done
18 like this that the residents, the public their
19 opinion gets weighed a little bit more in regards to
20 this and, you know, but in regards to when
21 developments are happening, I do think about all
22 those, the effect it has on emergency services and
23 schools.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I—I think my other
25 question is what—that what we've been going through

2 in our district is an example. I mean there's all
3 thee technicalities, and one of the—the developments—
4 there's three development projects coming all at once
5 to my district, and with our scale building and—but
6 because of a technicality, a minor modification
7 versus a major modification that the City Planning,
8 not the commission, but the Department of City
9 Planning decided it is a minor modification. So, it
10 doesn't have to go through ULURP. It doesn't have to
11 go through the community board. It doesn't have to
12 go through City Council, and that's where the debate
13 is right now. And so the borough president and I we
14 supported—we submitted a text amendment, and we
15 wanted to go through a ULURP because that would give
16 us a full review from the community board and the
17 City Planning Commission will also have their review,
18 and then it will come to the City Council. So, those
19 are the—I mean those are the technicality thing. Now
20 how would you see yourself in terms of being on a
21 Commission and really looking at those situation and
22 debating and making sure that—that the community does
23 get a full participation and not be eliminated
24 because of certain technicalities?

2 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: That's actually a great
3 question because I was always concerned about ULURP
4 process. I believe in them because it does reach out
5 from the community board. It's supposed to trickle
6 down to the rest of the community. What I always
7 found was whenever we would introduce that we had the
8 rezoning, that a lot of the residents that came to
9 our board meetings were not even informed. They
10 didn't know anything about it, and I felt—to me I
11 felt workshops are probably necessary to be done with
12 CPC and they recently did one at Queensborough Hall
13 for Land Use, which I thought was absolutely
14 fantastic for community board members to at least be
15 educated on the basic knowledge of how City Planning
16 operates. And I feel like these workshops should
17 really be expanded to a lot of the residents, and how
18 I would do that was I was always—had—I always reached
19 out to all my local civics, and I kept in touch with
20 them and they used to have great turnouts at their
21 meetings. Whether I would speak myself or some of
22 myself or send my Land Use Chair, I thought that was
23 a great tool that informed the people. So, if they
24 had any issues they can come to the community board,
25 talk to myself or talk to the Land Use so they can be

2 informed on the process. And what they need to do
3 is weigh in. That way City Planning and the elected
4 officials see that the community is involved, and
5 they have concerns or whether they are for a project
6 or not, they will at least have a chance to voice
7 their opinion, but at least be educated on the
8 process and manner. I think that's very critical
9 especially in the City of New York.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Well, unfortunately,
11 the community board doesn't have that--

12 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: [interposing] Yes.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: --expertise.

14 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: Yeah, and--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I know some borough
16 presidents provide a planning fellow to really help
17 with that.

18 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: Yeah.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So, I think that's--
20 that's important, but really having City Planning
21 working together with the Community because talk
22 about city planning. Where is the planning?

23 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: [laughs]

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: A lot of times when
3 development come in, there was no planning that
4 involves the community.

5 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: Right.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So, I think that
7 it's something that I would look forward to working
8 with you and—and being on the Commission to really
9 help push that. So that the community can fully get
10 involved and be in the process.

11 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: Thank you.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you. Thank
13 you, Chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Council Member
15 Adams.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you, Madam
17 Chair. Raj, congratulations.

18 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: Thank you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: I'm very, very
20 proud of you for—for this moment in time. You and I
21 have known each other for about nine years or so.

22 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: We are former colleagues
23 both former Chairpersons of Community Board 9 and
24 Community Board 12 respectfully, and I personally
25 want to vouch for your great work, your knowledge of

2 land use and ULURP process, and I know that we are
3 accepting a wonderful candidate for this position.
4 Once again, I congratulate you. I thank you for your
5 countless years—I mean we can count them, but the
6 hours are countless on a Community Board. Everyday
7 runs together. So, that it's one long day much like
8 the Council I might add.

9 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: [laughs]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: But I want to
11 congratulate you. The community board's loss is
12 truly, truly the Mayor's gain. So congratulations,
13 Raj.

14 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Yes.

15 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: Thank you very much,
16 Council Member Adams. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Okay, any other
18 questions? Okay, let' have a vote.

19 CLERK: Roll call Committee on Rules,
20 Preconsidered the appointment of Mr. Rampershad.
21 Chair Koslowitz.

22 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: I wholeheartedly
23 vote aye, and I really look forward to continuing
24 working with you.

25 CLERK: Gibson.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: On behalf of the
3 Borough of the Bronx, congratulations. [laughter] I
4 look forward to working with you. I had to throw
5 that in.

6 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: Thank you.

7 CLERK: Chin.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Look forward to
9 working with you and congratulations. I vote aye .

10 CLERK: Lancman.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: [off mic] Aye.

12 CLERK: Treyger.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: [off mic] Aye.

14 CLERK: Adams.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Once again an
16 enthusiastic aye.

17 CLERK: Matteo.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: [off mic] Aye.

19 CLERK: By a vote of 7 in the
20 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,
21 the preconsidered M has been adopted by the
22 committee.

23 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Congratulations.

24 RAJ RAMPERSHAD: Thank you very much.

25 [background comments]

2 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: We're going to
3 keep the meeting open. [background comments] [door
4 slams] [pause]

5 CLERK: Continuation of roll call,
6 Committee on Rules, Preconsidered M appointment for
7 Mr. Kest. Speaker Johnson.

8 SPEAKER JOHNSON: I vote aye on all, and
9 I want to thank Chair Koslowitz for chairing this
10 hearing.

11 CLERK: The vote on Mr. Kest now stands
12 at 7 in the affirmative 1 in the negative and no
13 abstentions, and continuation roll call Preconsidered
14 M in relation to the appointment of Mr. Rampershad.
15 Speaker Johnson. [pause]

16 SPEAKER JOHNSON: I vote aye on all.

17 CLERK: The final vote on that is now 8
18 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative and no
19 abstentions. [pause]

20 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: [gavel] The
21 meeting on Rules, Privileges and Elections is
22 adjourned. [gavel] [background comments, pause]

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24

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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 November 8, 2018