

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON RULES,
PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

----- X

NOVEMBER 19, 2020
Start: 10:36 A.M.
Recess: 11:25 A.M.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING

B E F O R E: KAREN KOSLOWITZ, CHAIRPERSON

COUNCIL MEMBERS: ADRIENNE E. ADAMS
MARGARET S. CHIN
COREY D. JOHNSON
STEVEN MATTEO
DEBORAH L. ROSE
RITCHIE J. TORRES
MARK TREYGER

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

LANCE POLIVY, Rules Committee Counsel

RODNEY PEPE-SOUVENIR, Board of Elections
Commissioner candidate

1 COMMITTEE ON RULES,
2 PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

3

4 JOHANNA M. CASTRO: We are live.

5 SARGEANT PEDRO LUGO: Alright the live
6 feed is rolling. Uhm, Sargeant Hope, Sargeant Hope
7 if you could start the cloud, thank you and you may
8 begin your opening statement.

9 SARGEANT HOPE: Good morning. Welcome to
10 the New York City Council Committee hearing on Rules,
11 Privilege and Election. At this time, would all
12 Council Members and Council Member staff please turn
13 on your videos. I repeat, Council Members and
14 Council Member staff please turn on your videos.
15 Thank you. To minimize disruption, please place all
16 electronic devices to vibrate or silent mode. Chair,
17 we are ready to begin.

18 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Okay, thank
19 you. Good morning and welcome to the Committee on
20 Rules, Privileges and Elections. My name is Karen
21 Koslowitz and I am Chair of the Committee on Rules,
22 Privileges and Elections. Before we begin this
23 hearing, I would like to introduce the Council
24 Members of this committee who have joined us today.
25 Uhm, Speaker Johnson will be joining us during the
meeting but we have now with us Minority Leader Steve
Matteo, Council Member Adrienne Adams, Council Member

COMMITTEE ON RULES,
PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

4

1 Margaret Chin, Council Member Deborah Rose and right
2 now that's what we have. We are going to be joined
3 by Mark Treyger shortly. I would also like to
4 acknowledge Rules Committee Counsel, Lance, I'm going
5 to screw up your name again. Polivy and the staff
6 members of the Council's Investigative Unit, Chuck
7 Davis, Chief Compliance Officer and investigators
8 Andre Johnson-Brown, Alecia Vasel (SP?) and Ramsey
9 Sputun (SP?). Today, the Rules Committee will
10 consider two matters. First consideration is Rodney
11 Pepe-Souvenir for re-appointment to the position of
12 Democratic Commissioner of Elections for Kings
13 County. Second, certain committee changes.
14 Committee changes includes dissolving the Standing
15 Committee on the Justice System and transferring its
16 jurisdiction to the Committees on Public Safety and
17 General Welfare and changes to the membership of
18 certain Standing Committees and for Land Use
19 Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises. Should Ms.
20 Pepe-Souvenir receive the advice and consent of the
21 Council, she will be re-appointed for a four-year
22 term that will begin on January 1, 2020 and expire on
23 December 31, 2024. Chuck Davis, our Chief Compliance
24 Officer has briefed all members of this committee
25

COMMITTEE ON RULES,
PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

5

1 regarding the contents of Ms. Pepe-Souvenir
2 background investigation. The Board of Elections
3 consists of 10 Commissioners, two from each of the
4 City's five counties. Each Commissioner serves a
5 term of four years or until their successor is
6 appointed. Commissioners shall be registered voters
7 in the county for which they are appointed and
8 registered as a member of the political party for
9 which they are nominated. New York Election Law
10 section 3-204 subsection 1 states that at least 30
11 days before the first day of January of any year in
12 which a Commissioner of Elections is to be appointed,
13 the Chairman or Secretary of appropriate party county
14 committee shall file a certificate of party
15 recommendation with the clerk of the appropriate
16 local legislative body. New York Election Law
17 section 3-204 subsection 4 states that Commissioners
18 of Election shall be appointed by the County
19 Legislative body or in the City of New York by the
20 City Council. It is for this reason that the
21 committee is considering this nomination today. The
22 Kings County Board of Elections submitted a valid
23 certificate of party recommendation to the City Clerk
24 on October 23, 2020. This was more than 30 days
25

COMMITTEE ON RULES,
PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

6

1 before the first day of January of the year in which
2 Commissioners are appointed. If the Council as whole
3 does not act within 30 days of receiving a valid
4 certificate of recommendation the applicable
5 political party conference within the Council becomes
6 empowered to approve the recommendation on its own.
7

8 For example, a Democratic vacancy could be filled by
9 a vote of the Democratic Party's Conference and a
10 Republican vacancy would be filled by a vote of
11 Republican Party's Conference. The Board and its
12 Commission is responsible for the maintenance and
13 administration of voting records and elections. The
14 Board also exercises quasi-judicial powers by
15 conducting hearing to validate nominating petitions
16 of candidates and nomination to elective office. The
17 Board is required to make an annual report of its
18 affairs and proceedings to the Council.

19 Commissioners receive a \$300 per diem for each day's
20 attendance at meetings of the Board or any of its
21 committees with a maximum of \$30,000 per year.

22 Welcome, Ms. Pepe-Souvenir. Would you please raise
23 your right hand to be sworn in? Can we sear... **(CROSS-**
24 **TALK)** .

25

1 COMMITTEE ON RULES,
2 PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

7

3 LANCE POLIVY: Do you swear to tell the
4 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

5 RODNEY PEPE-SOUVENIR: Yes, I do.

6 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Okay, would
7 you like to make a statement?

8 RODNEY PEPE-SOUVENIR: Yes, I would.

9 Thank you so much. Good morning members of the
10 Rules, Privilege and Elections Committee, I am
11 humbled and honored to be before this body as a
12 candidate for the Democratic Election Commissioners
13 representing Kings County for the 2021-2024 term. My
14 name is Rodney L. Pepe-Souvenir and I am an attorney
15 with over 20 years of experience who put myself
16 through Law School while being married and a mother
17 of two. My parents who were immigrants with a 5th
18 and 8th grade education instilled in me an
19 appreciation of public service to hold scripture to
20 whom much is given, much is required. My goal in Law
21 School was always public service and as you can see
22 by my resume, that is the path that I pursued. I am
23 currently employed by the City University of New York
24 as a University Title XI Director, overseeing 25
25 campuses and their immediate response to allegations
of sexual misconduct along with instilling a Sexual

1 Misconduct Awareness Program for CUNY students. When
2 I considered the role of the Election Commissioner, I
3 first thought of my parents who suffered the tyranny
4 of a dictator where their right to vote was not
5 honored or respected. It was important to them that
6 I did not take that right lightly and I exercised it
7 at every election that I was eligible to vote in. I
8 also had the thought of the huge responsibility as an
9 Election Commissioner of ensuring that everyone who
10 was legally eligible to run for office or vote could.
11 I recalled my days working in Georgia for the 2008
12 Presidential Election, making calls throughout the
13 country asking voters to vote on Election Day
14 serving as an election monitor at various polling
15 sites throughout Atlanta where I was often not
16 welcomed because of the color of my skin, but
17 nonetheless there to ensure that voting was accessible
18 to all, particularly to the disabled and the elderly
19 who stood in the hot sun, determined to exercise
20 their right to vote. I have been an Election
21 Commissioner for approximately one month. Although
22 one could say it was a baptism by fire, it was
23 exciting. I realized this was an election cycle that
24 I may never see again in my lifetime. I attended my
25

1 first public meeting with the other Commissioners and
2 four days later early voting began. I sat out to
3 visit polling sites which I did throughout the
4 weekend. I wanted to see how the poll sites were
5 being run, ensuring that the voters were having a
6 good experience and to see that the poll workers were
7 staying safe. I was **(INAUDIBLE)** by the iconic New
8 York venues, understanding the need to allow everyone
9 to vote safely by opening such venues as the Barclays
10 and Kings Theatre in Brooklyn as a voting site. This
11 meant that the community was willing to work with us
12 to think creatively about the voting process and how
13 to make it more accessible. I came to understand
14 that having safe voting sites was not only based on
15 the Board of Election but it was a partnership with
16 the community and venues that agreed to allow the
17 Board of Elections to use their space. As I observed
18 the poll site, I would direct Line Managers to
19 accompany the elderly, disabled, pregnant women and
20 families with children to the head of the line so
21 that would not have to stand too long. Surprisingly,
22 in some cases, where a senior citizen was brought up
23 the line so as not to have to wait, they often
24 refused. They wanted to experience the standing and
25

1 proudly voting as such an important election. In a
2 more compactum site, I directed that the poll workers
3 ensure that people would appropriately socially
4 distance. In one polling site, when I was alerted
5 that voters had issues understanding directions due
6 to language, I directed that they transfer poll
7 workers who spoke that language to that site to add
8 comfort and provide direction to voters in a language
9 that they understood. In another poll site I asked
10 that port-a-potties be placed there for seniors on
11 the line. I was inspired, exhilarated at the voter's
12 determinations to vote and the yeoman's job that the
13 poll workers were doing. On Election Day I traveled
14 to polling sites, I spoke to poll workers and voters
15 alike ensuring all was well. I visited as many
16 polling sites as I could. I even assisted voters. I
17 later went to the Brooklyn voting machine facility
18 where the polls closed and observed the police
19 escorts of the return of poll pads, machines and all
20 the ballots back to the facility. I watched and I
21 spoke to the other overnight workers gathered to
22 unload it to begin the process of accounting for all
23 the voting-related materials. I didn't return home
24 until 2 a.m., I was exhausted but it was worth it. I
25

1 am encouraged by the fact that New York Legislators
2 have been keeping their eye on the goal of creating
3 an accessible system with early voting and most
4 recently having passed legislation that would allow
5 persons as long as they are eligible to be
6 automatically registered to vote upon completing
7 various municipal forms such as a driver's license or
8 health forms at a local hospital. Absentee ballots
9 being counted without a postmark one day after
10 election day as long as it is received in the Board
11 of Elections and date stamped the day after Election
12 Day. I am learning and I recognize there is more work
13 to be done at the board of elections such as making
14 the voting process language accessible for those
15 where English is not their first language. While
16 various early voting locating more early voting sites
17 that is ADA compliant and accessible, making all
18 voters aware of early voting sites or the times of
19 operations. Most importantly, having adequate poll
20 workers who are trained and competent allowing for
21 the voting process to run smooth. In my short tenure
22 as an Election Commissioner I have come to understand
23 that huge undertaking of ensuring voters can vote.
24 My focus is to ensure that the election process is
25

1 fair, equitable and accessible to all candidates and
2 voters in Brooklyn. I am committed to working with
3 my fellow Commissioners to uphold our Election Laws,
4 following procedures and to make changes that would
5 enable the election process to work for the people.
6 Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Thank you.
9 Uhm, I have a few questions and then we will open it
10 up to my colleagues. What steps do you think the
11 Board of Elections should take to ensure that it
12 meets its November 28 deadline for certification of
13 this November's General Election considering the
14 large increase in absentee ballots from prior years?

15 RODNEY PEPE-SOUVENIR: Well, they are
16 taking the steps actually and it is increasing the
17 number of people working at the sites, uhm, ensuring
18 that the ballots, the valid ballots are being opened
19 appropriately. Ensuring that where we have contested
20 elections, that is being handled. Uhm, what slows
21 down the process of course, is in the election, in
22 the contested elections uhm you have poll watchers
23 and you have attorneys who are there who are
24 observing everything and could raise objections and
25 that slows down the process, but we have adequate

1 people on site to ensure that we are finishing and
2 completing on time. While November 28th falls on a
3 Saturday, uhm and we may have that few extra days we
4 are using every moment possible to ensure that we are
5 completed on time.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Thank you.

8 In your opinion, should staff positions, other than
9 election inspector and poll clerk be filled based on
10 party recommendations?

11 RODNEY PEPE-SOUVENIR: Well, we have the
12 statute, the Election Law Statute that allows us uhm
13 to hire people uhm based on that process. Uhm, I
14 think that we should still continue the mechanism of
15 hiring people within the community because of the
16 fact that we need a large number of people in a short
17 period of time and using websites and all of those
18 things might just slow down the process of getting in
19 as many people who require training to be able to
20 adequately have the voting process run smoothly.

21 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Okay, and
22 many voters who attempted to vote early in this
23 November's General Election in Kings County waited in
24 line for several hours. What can Kings County do to
25

1 expand early voting hours, sites and capacity at
2 existing sites?
3

4 RODNEY PEPE-SOUVENIR: Well, first of all
5 you have to remember we are in the middle of a
6 pandemic so we have to be concerned about poll
7 worker's safety and the voter's safety. What we did
8 do during this particular early voting election, when
9 we realized that people were coming in earlier, we
10 moved the times that we opened up our sites from,
11 well we varied it because we thought we were helping
12 the community, we moved it all to 7 o'clock, and so
13 the sites were open at 7 o'clock in the morning until
14 the last voter was able to vote. Uhm, that enabled us
15 to help a lot of people who tend to come early, then
16 the site is open to accommodate them. It's I should
17 say its unfortunate, but it shows the tenacity of
18 people, I found like you know a lot of the seniors
19 were very anxious to vote and so while the site
20 opened up at 7, they were there at 5:30, 6 o'clock
21 and that's just them and if my parents had been alive
22 they would be doing the same thing. They would be at
23 the poll site at 5 o'clock even though it opened at
24 7, but we recognized the need to open earlier and we
25

1 did it and we probably will do the same thing again
2 for the other, for the next election cycle.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Okay, thank
5 you. Does anybody else, my colleagues have any
6 questions that they would like to ask?

7 LANCE POLIVY: Yes, Chair Koslowitz,
8 Council Members Treyger and Adams have questions.

9 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Okay.
10 Council Member Treyger?

11 MARK TREYGER: Thank you so much, Chair
12 Koslowitz and thank you so much for your leadership
13 as always and welcome to Commissioner Pepe-Souvenir.
14 I just wanted to state for the record that
15 Commissioner Pepe-Souvenir as she was initially
16 someone that we were interviewing and having
17 conversations with in the Brooklyn delegation and
18 beyond made herself always available, accessible,
19 answered every question, every single member who
20 wanted to have a chance to speak, ask questions, she
21 made the time, even members beyond the delegation and
22 I want to just publicly acknowledge that and thank
23 her for that. I also want to state that just recently
24 during their own voting process, there was a little
25 issue with a machine right in Coney Island and the

1 Commissioner was made aware and in record time, there
2 was a response. Usually in the past, we had to wait a
3 long time for a repair person to come down but as
4 soon as she became aware, they had sent folks down to
5 make repairs immediately and that matters because
6 even the poll workers and folks said wow they never
7 saw such a fast response, I just want that into the
8 record and I want to just acknowledge and thank her
9 for that. Uhm, my question today and I think this is
10 something Commission knows that it is an issue that I
11 care very deeply about as the only you know Russian-
12 speaking member of the New York City Council and as
13 someone who has personally witnessed Russian-speaking
14 voters. They are not just Russian speaking, folks
15 who speak Arabic, folks who speak Urdu who have come
16 to a poll site only to be turned away by the
17 information desk because no one can help make sure
18 that they identify their address and their election
19 district to go vote and I can't tell you the number
20 of painful stories we have heard particularly from
21 seniors who face that language barrier and no one
22 could tell them if they are in the right place or not
23 and we lose so many people. So, an issue that I have
24 been working on for a number of years is language
25

1 access to have Russian speaking and other language
2 translators stationed at poll sites and for years
3 this has been a battle. You know, the City Council
4 actually under the leadership of Former Speaker
5 Viverito and then continued under Speaker Johnson
6 helped provide funding for language translators and
7 the DOE in a way resisted that funding. Then the
8 Mayor created a pilot program with the Mayor's Office
9 of Immigrant Affairs and there is still tension with
10 the Board of Elections and now they argue that
11 because the state does not mandate it, that is why
12 they are not doing it but there is nothing that
13 prohibits from providing additional language services
14 and so, Commissioner you and I have talked about this
15 at great length, where does this effort stand and I
16 know that you have been very supportive but I think
17 it is important to get to the record, the support for
18 a Russian-speaking, Asian, Creole, Arabic, Urdu,
19 other critical languages that really reflect the
20 diversity of our neighborhoods and particularly in
21 areas that suffer from low voter turnout because of
22 barriers such as language access, so, again I
23 appreciate your time and your answers today.
24

2 RODNEY PEPE-SOUVENIR: Thank you so much
3 Council Member Treyger and I appreciate your, your
4 comments. I am humbled by them. Uhm, yes we have had
5 this conversation many times and as a Haitian-
6 American uhm I understand the issue of language
7 access and as I explained during my statement, I was
8 notified that there was an area where there was a
9 language issue and I immediately had them send people
10 who spoke that language to that area because I know
11 the importance of language access. I am relatively
12 new, I just started, so the conversation of language
13 access is one that I am bringing to the table and I
14 am pushing fervently uhm for us to have that. I know
15 that you have been working on it for quite some time
16 and I want to join you uhm as being a Commissioner
17 and being at the table to discuss it and to discuss
18 the importance of it and to show how it can affect
19 uhm the issue of voting in many communities. So, I
20 could not say to you at this stage here it is because
21 it is a conversation that is about to be brought up.
22 As I said, I came in, in the middle of the heat of
23 the election cycle so it was just concentrating on
24 working on ensuring that people could vote, that we
25 were keeping everybody safe during this pandemic but

1
2 certainly it is an issue that is at the top of my
3 list and you and I share that concern as well. So,
4 you know, I hope over time that you will see uhm if
5 we can make changes, if there are Legislative changes
6 to support us that we will be doing that.

7 MARK TREYGER: Well, I appreciate that
8 and you have been a very uhm courageously outspoken
9 leader in this effort, more than many folks from the
10 past I will say. In the Board of Elections this has
11 not always been an issue that the folks have always
12 prioritized but you certainly have and you hit the
13 ground running and I appreciate how responsive and
14 accessible you have been already to districts like
15 mine who have historically been very marginalized and
16 ignored and so I really appreciate you taking on this
17 role. This is not easy. This is one of the most
18 critical functions of our Democracy and so I
19 appreciate you and to Chair Koslowitz and to my
20 colleagues I am enthusiastically, enthusiastically in
21 support of Commissioner Pepe-Souvenir for her
22 dedication, her leadership and I look forward to
23 working with us on this issue and many more and I
24 thank the Chair for her time.

CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Thank you,
I just want to add that I have 60,000 Bukharian
people in my community and I have the same problem in
the Queens, and with that, Council Member Adams.

ADRIENNE ADAMS: Thank you so much Madam
Chair, I could get into the diversity of Queens right
now as well but I will not chime in on that. Welcome
Commissioner Pepe-Souvenir, it is a pleasure to be in
your company today. Uhm we have heard so many great
things about you so I definitely celebrate your
appointment as well. I just have one question along
one line because this is, this is very important, it
is a nuance uhm to the BOE, many City, State and
local leadership, Community Boards and voters are
very, very concerned about the Board of Elections
preparedness with regard to handling ranked choice
voting in the next election cycle which is coming up
very quickly on us. So, I just want to get your
feelings, I've spoken with others who are involved in
Board of Election leadership and I just, I know that
you are new, on a scale of one to ten, as a
Commissioner, what is your level of comfortability
with rank choice voting and the mandate of the Board
of Elections to serve the voters?

2 RODNEY PEPE-SOUVENIR: I have to say my
3 level of comfortability having spoken to my fellow
4 Commissioners and heard the conversations at the
5 table, it is about an 8, 9 at this point. They
6 recognize the need for more than anything education,
7 uhm educating voters, educating everyone about it and
8 ready to work with organizations around the City uhm
9 and uhm, the Legislative Body such as the Mayors, CC
10 and the like to ensure that we educate our voters on
11 what rank choice voting is. Uhm, I am particularly
12 very sensitive, of course, to the immigrant community
13 who may not be familiar with what it means. You know
14 everytime I, I think of things and I do things I look
15 at it from the lens of my parents because my parents,
16 English was a second language for them and I being
17 the first one born in America was the American who
18 could translate everything and I understand that and
19 I recognize in some communities they don't have that.
20 They don't have a child or a relative who can
21 translate for them and having information about how
22 that is supposed to work, how rank choice voting is
23 supposed to work is paramount to the minds of the
24 people at the Board of Election and so we are
25 preparing, we are getting ready, we are working with

2 you know media and all of that to get the information
3 out as early as possible. So, I am comf... (CROSS-
4 TALK) working together.

5 ADRIENNE ADAMS: I appreciate your
6 response and just to put that again on the front
7 burner as I have with uhm with a lot of your
8 colleagues, it is a grave concern. We speak about it
9 out here and we've got quite frankly a big question
10 mark over the voters' heads because we are very
11 concerned. Community Board leaders don't know what
12 this is and as to, up until right now, quite frankly
13 this has not been a priority for the Board of
14 Elections. They have been waiting for the election,
15 the Presidential Election to get out of the way
16 before focusing on this thing that is now coming at
17 us like a freight train. So, I am going to encourage
18 you and implore you to do everything in your power to
19 continue to prepare your colleagues at the Board of
20 Elections for this freight train heading our way.
21 Thank you so much.

22 RODNEY PEPE-SOUVENIR: Thank you so much
23 and I do recognize that and I appreciate you. Thank
24 you.

2 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Okay,
3 anyone else? Lance, do we have anybody else with
4 questions?

5 LANCE POLIVY: Uhm yes, Council Member
6 Rose.

7 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Go ahead.

8 DEBORAH ROSE: Okay, hi, thank you Chair.
9 I was trying to lower my hand before Lance answered
10 because my sister, Council Member Adams and I are
11 sympatico that has been my issue, my over-arching
12 concern. I am so worried that voters, that voters
13 don't even understand rank choice voting and uhm and
14 so Council Member Adams articulated my concerns. I
15 want, but I did want to ask you uhm since you
16 recognize and I was really impressed with your
17 answers to, to the questionnaire and you recognize
18 that we need to educate the electorate, how, how, I'm
19 really interested in how the Board of Elections plans
20 to do that? You know, uhm, it's, it's one thing ot
21 say that we are going to educate them, but we know.
22 I am a Chair of a Committee and one of the things the
23 City does not do well is outreach and education uhm
24 you know and making you know information readily
25 available. What, what steps are, is BOE going to

1 take to actually educate the voters that they
2 understand this process and uhm and I want to commend
3 you for being able to you know be thrown. You are,
4 emerging by fire. You have little time to get
5 acclimated to it. I was really worried. I had
6 spoken with Commissioner Antella (SP?) uhm because
7 she was filling both roles for Brooklyn and Staten
8 Island and I know how concerned she was about whether
9 or not Brooklyn would be able to meet some of the
10 challenges with you know, uhm without a Commissioner
11 in place and I want to say that you know it is
12 admirable that you were able to, to jump in there and
13 expedited it and get things done. When Council
14 Member Treyger has high praise for someone uhm you
15 know all I can say is, I can only co-sign so, uhm I
16 want to thank you about that but I am really, really
17 seriously concerned about rank choice and how we are
18 going to educate the electorate because most people
19 don't understand it, including the candidates that
20 are running for my seat. Thank you, if you could
21 answer that for me?

22
23 RODNEY PEPE-SOUVENIR: So, so what I've
24 learned so far is the Committee is partnering with
25 community organizations to get the information out,

1 uhm having materials that are in a basic language for
2 people to understand. Once we have uhm buy in from
3 the community organizations and spending the time to
4 really get them to understand the process, it is
5 through those organizations that will help train the
6 electorate. That is what we are working on doing,
7 along with social media, along with literature, along
8 with putting things on our website for people to have
9 access to. Uhm, so it's, it's a working hand in hand
10 with not only community organizations but with
11 elected officials using everything in our power,
12 because like you, I understand the concern of
13 ensuring that people understand how this works and if
14 not just for the electorate it is like you said for
15 the elected officials as well. They want to be able
16 to know that they are on a fair playing field with
17 everybody else and nobody is left by the wayside.
18 So, we are really seriously working on getting that
19 information out, yes, this election cycle was very
20 different than what we normally were used to. We had
21 over 700,000 ballots that we had actually count and
22 that is what we are doing. We were ready to have
23 this information so we could certify everything to
24 have the electoral college sit, **(INAUDIBLE)** to put
25

1 the electoral college in place, so there is a lot
2 going on but rank choice voting is certainly at the
3 forefront it is not on the back burner at all.

4
5 DEBORAH ROSE: Is there a timeline uhm
6 that you know that is in place for when we are going
7 to start to see some of the materials and uhm I know
8 after the conversation with Council Member Treyger I
9 know they will be in all of the representative
10 languages that we have in New York City but is there
11 a timeline that you know that we can begin to see
12 this. I mean because I was really concerned, like we
13 had propositions on a ballot on election cycle but
14 there was no real education and so that's how rank
15 choice voting got you know, got voted on and there
16 was no real you know, uhm education, uhm around it
17 and uhm and even you know the advocates didn't do,
18 didn't put any money into you know advocating for it
19 or not advocating for it. So, I am just concerned
20 that we will do it not in a timely manner where it
21 will be rushed and, you know, we will be trying to
22 get people to understand it and there just won't be
23 adequate time. So, is there a timeline and, and can
24 we make it really soon.

1
2 RODNEY PEPE-SOUVENIR: Well yeah, let's
3 try to make it really soon. I unfortunately, because
4 of my newness I don't know what the timeline is. I
5 know the conversation has been had and because the
6 concentration was on getting this out. I am not
7 familiar with the timeline there very well maybe. I
8 am just not familiar with it at this time but again I
9 am emphasize to you that it is a priority, we
10 understand the importance of not only getting it
11 right for us and as far as doing the election and
12 being able to count votes but it is also about
13 ensuring that people know what they are doing and how
14 they are doing it and we do recognize that. So, can
15 I give you a date? A specific timeline? I can tell
16 you that it is seriously being worked on.

17 DEBORAH ROSE: Well, uhm, I just want to
18 ask you to please you know bring it up at the next
19 meeting and let them know that there needs to be some
20 expedience about this so we can get it expedited.
21 The education process is going to take a little bit
22 of time because it is new. Uhm, we used to have it
23 through school board elections used to be done that
24 way but they are not anymore so people, you know, I
25 am just concerned about, about how we get them up to

1 speed in time for it to be you know relevant for the
2 new election cycle.
3

4 RODNEY PEPE-SOUVENIR: Absolutely,
5 absolutely, it is not falling on deaf ears.
6 Certainly, your concerns and the concerns of many of
7 the Council Members and even lay people is not
8 falling on deaf ears.

9 DEBORAH ROSE: Thank you. Thank you.

10 RODNEY PEPE-SOUVENIR: You are welcome.

11 DEBORAH ROSE: And congratulations.

12 RODNEY PEPE-SOUVENIR: Thank you so much,
13 I appreciate you.

14 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Is there
15 anybody else that have any questions?

16 LANCE POLIVY: Not at this time.

17 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Okay thanks
18 and thank you very much and good luck to you again.

19 RODNEY PEPE-SOUVENIR: Thank you so much
20 Council Member Koslowitz. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Okay, now we
22 will go on to the second topic. Now we will talk
23 about dissolving the Standing Committee on the
24 Justice System and changes to the membership of
25 certain Standing Committees and the Land Use

1 COMMITTEE ON RULES,
2 PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

29

3 Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises. Pursuant to
4 10.20 of the Rules of the City Council, the Committee
5 on Rules, Privileges and Elections can amend the rule
6 of the Council with a later vote of the majority of
7 all Council Members. First, we will consider a Pre-
8 considered resolution that would amend Rule 7.00 (a)
9 by dissolving the Committee on the Justice System and
10 transferring a jurisdiction to the Committee on
11 Public Safety and General Welfare. The Chairperson
12 of the Standing Committee Rory Lancman resigned from
13 the City Council on November 4, 2020. This rule
14 change requires a majority vote of all members of the
15 Committee of Rules, Privileges and Elections pursuant
16 to Rule 7.70 (a) and a majority vote of all Council
17 Members pursuant to Rule 10.20. Today's second pre-
18 considered resolution pursuant to that same power
19 amends Rule 7.00 (a) by changing the membership of
20 certain Standing Committees and the Land Use
21 Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises. This rule
22 change simply requires a majority vote of the
23 Committee of Rules, Privileges and Elections pursuant
24 to Rule 7.70 and a majority vote of the Council
25 pursuant to Rule 10.20. Do any members have any
questions? No questions?

LANCE POLIVY: Council Member Rose.

DEBORAH ROSE: Thank you, uhm, I just wanted to a little clarification about moving the Justice Committee into Public Safety and General Welfare? Uhm, I thought that passing you know the Justice System out from uhm, Public Safety actually made, made good sense in terms of the fact that we were looking at different criminal justice reform as separate and aside from just oversight of public safety of the police department. I am just not sure why it is being pushed back in to Public Safety? I think that they are very broad and both have enough substance and enough, there is a need for oversight of these two systems, even though they are symbiotic but they are separate and different. I am just, I am just not sure why we are precipitating you know putting it back in to Public Safety uhm and if it is just because of the loss of the Chair? Uhm, I think that then we should look at you know finding a Chair for it not dispersing you know with it, uhm, I just, I would like some clarification about why we're, we are making this decision?

CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Who can answer that?

1
2 DEBORAH ROSE: Am I out of order? Is
3 that an out of order question, for this format?

4 LANCE POLIVY: Council Member Rose you
5 are not out of order. To provide a little bit of
6 clarification, there had been a number of shifts in
7 the jurisdiction of the Committees during this term
8 including uhm that there used to be a Committee on
9 Juvenile Justice and that Committee was dissolved and
10 then its jurisdiction was spread out to the Justice
11 System and the Justice System got additional
12 jurisdiction and the Justice System has been created
13 in the not so recent past.

14 DEBORAH ROSE: Right, right.

15 LANCE POLIVY: And when the Justice
16 System was created its jurisdiction was taken from
17 Public Safety, so, the jurisdiction is simply
18 returning to Committees that had previously had it
19 and for General Welfare where it makes sense. Uhm,
20 since ACS is already in General Welfare now, we are
21 adding a second component to ACS with the other
22 components of ACS so that they are all in the same
23 place.

24 DEBORAH ROSE: That kind of sound like
25 double speak to me but maybe I'm, I'm uhm, I just

2 think that the Criminal Justice System uhm is, is
3 broad enough to have its own, you know its own
4 Committee you know and oversight but I'm not going to
5 be labeled the point. I just, I just wanted to know
6 uhm I just want to make sure that those, those
7 topics, those uhm very important justice reforms that
8 we've worked so hard to uhm to get uhm aren't watered
9 down by being put into you know different, different
10 uhm Committees that have so much to deal with that it
11 will just, I don't want the importance of it to get
12 you know convoluted and, and overlooked. So, I'm
13 fine, I'm done. I just needed clarification, thank
14 you.

15 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Okay, so is
16 there, is there anybody else?

17 DEBORAH ROSE: But I won't be voting for
18 that.

19 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Okay,
20 anybody else having anything they want to say? Okay,
21 with that I am going to ask the Clerk to call the
22 roll.

23 LEGISLATIVE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Good
24 morning, still morning. Good morning everyone.
25 William Martin, Committee Clerk, roll call vote

1 COMMITTEE ON RULES,
PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

33

2 Committee on Rules, Privileges and Elections. The
3 items are coupled. Chair Koslowitz?

4 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: I vote aye
5 on both.

6 LANCE POLIVY: To clarify, there are
7 three items. There is Ms. Pepe-Souvenir's nomination
8 and two different resolutions on Committee changes.

9 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Okay,
10 sorry.

11 LANCE POLIVY: No, no, I just want to
12 make sure that all the members know what they are
13 voting on.

14 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Okay, I
15 vote aye on all three.

16 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
17 you. Uhm Council Member Chin?

18 MARGARET CHIN: Aye on all.

19 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN:
20 Treyger?

21 MARK TREYGER: I vote aye.

22 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN: Adams?

23 ADRIENNE ADAMS: Aye.

24 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN:
25 Matteo?

1 COMMITTEE ON RULES,
2 PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

34

3 STEVEN MATTEO: Aye.

4 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN: Uhm,
5 Council Member Rose? Do you need a moment?

6 DEBORAH ROSE: Uhm hold on. I vote, uhm I
7 vote, I vote no on consolidating the Committee the
8 Justice System and uhm and definitely aye on the
9 appointment, re-appointment of Commissioner Pepe-
10 Souvenir and for the other amendment to the
11 Committee. Thank you.

12 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
13 you, absolutely. One moment. Okay.

14 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: I hold this
15 vote open.

16 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN: Chair
17 Koslowitz can I announce the results?

18 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Well, we
19 are going to hold the vote open you can announce the
20 result but we are going to hold the vote open for the
21 Speaker.

22 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN: Sure,
23 thank you, so by a vote of six in the affirmative,
24 zero in the negative and no extension, pre-considered
25 resolution in relation to Standing Committees and
M257 have been adopted by the Committee and by a vote

1 COMMITTEE ON RULES,
2 PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

35

3 of five in the affirmative, one in the negative and
4 no abstentions, the resolution in relation to
5 absolving the Justice System Committee is also
6 adopted by the Committee and a vote will be held up
7 at request of the Chair.

8 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: Hello?

9 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Hello.

10 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: It's Corey, I'm
11 here to vote.

12 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Okay, I'm
13 going to call on Speaker Corey Johnson for your vote.

14 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: I vote aye, thank
15 you Chair Koslowitz.

16 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Okay, with
17 this the meeting is adjourned.

18 LANCE POLIVY: Hold on, Chair Koslowitz.
19 Mr. Clerk can you please announce the final result of
20 the vote?

21 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN: Sure,
22 absolutely, final vote Committee on Rules, Privileges
23 and Elections, pre-considered resolution in relation
24 to Standing Committees and M257 have been adopted by
25 the Committee. Seven in the affirmative, zero in the
negative and no abstentions and pre-considered

1 COMMITTEE ON RULES,
2 PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

36

3 resolution in relation to absolving the Justice
4 System Committee is adopted by the Committee, six in
5 the affirmative, one in the negative and no
6 abstentions. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: Okay thank
8 you and with that this meeting is adjourned.

9 RODNEY PEPE-SOUVENIR: Thank you
10 everyone, have a wonderful day.

11 CHAIRPERSON KAREN KOSLOWITZ: You too and
12 congratulations.

13 JOHANNA M. CASTRO: Thank you Chair
14 Koslowitz. Uhm, Chair Chin can you please remain in
15 this Zoom and any members of the Aging Committee as
16 well. Thank you.

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date NOVEMBER 3, 2020