



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 164

Resolution calling upon the borough presidents to adopt a series of best practices for recruitment and appointment to community boards.

By Council Members Kallos, Vacca, Levine, Dromm, Lander, Menchaca, Reynoso, Rodriguez, Rose, Torres and Koo

Whereas, New York City's community boards are the most local form of government for city residents, and serve an essential role in our democracy by shaping neighborhood development and advising government on the needs and interests of the City's communities; and

Whereas, Chapter 70 Section 2800 of the New York City Charter stipulates that appointment to community boards is done by the borough presidents, with half of the appointments coming at the nomination of Council Members in proportion to their representation in that district; and

Whereas, Chapter 70 Section 2800 of the New York City Charter states that "the borough president shall assure adequate representation from the different geographic sections and neighborhoods within the community district. In making such appointments, the borough president shall consider whether the aggregate of appointments fairly represents all segments of the community;" and

Whereas, Four new borough presidents and twenty one new City Council Members, along with their previously elected colleagues, will be making 1,475 appointments to 59 community boards spanning all five boroughs between April 1st and May 30th 2014; and

Whereas, The Committee on Governmental Operations of the New York City Council held a hearing on March 3, 2014 on "Best Practices for Recruitment and Appointments to Community Boards," at which time the Committee received testimony from the New York City Comptroller, multiple borough presidents, and

community board members from all five boroughs, as well as good government groups and advocacy organizations; and

Whereas, The Committee Chair, Council Member Ben Kallos, recently issued a comprehensive “Policy Report: Improving Community Boards in New York City,” (“the Report”), outlining needed reforms to the City’s appointment process for community boards; and

Whereas, The Report calls for establishing citywide criteria and a uniform application for the recruitment and appointment of board members, with the aim of encouraging diversity of geography, education level, gender, race/ethnicity, age, and skill-sets, as well as appropriate representation of members residing in different types of housing, and from professions and backgrounds that are helpful to community boards; and

Whereas, The Report calls for requiring conflict of interest forms to be submitted by all members to ensure impartiality and transparency; and

Whereas, The Report calls for the creation of an “Independent Screening Panel,” modeled on the panel in place in Manhattan, to be implemented in all boroughs; and

Whereas, The Report calls for recruitment of new members through expanded public membership, public information sessions, press releases, email blasts, posters, websites, and social media, as well as television news and call-in shows, with special emphasis on targeted outreach to new residents in high growth areas; and

Whereas, The Report calls for providing the boards with up-to-date technology such as a centralized website providing information for all the boards in one location, as well as offering tools like interactive forums and maps, in addition to making applications available online; and

Whereas, The Report calls for ending automatic reappointment by requiring applications from those who have previously served with consideration given to attendance and participation; and

Whereas, The Report calls for the creation of a formal, standardized, and transparent process for filling community board positions and for mid-term vacancies to be filled by the borough presidents within 30 days; and

Whereas, The Report calls for requiring the borough presidents to issue an annual report detailing their outreach efforts, including whom they notified of the process, methods used, and the demographics of the community boards in comparison to the communities they serve; and

Whereas, The Report calls for phasing in term limits prospectively, limiting service to five (5) consecutive two (2) year terms, and establishing uniform term-lengths and limits for the position of chairperson and the committee chairs; and

Whereas, The Report calls for not appointing and/or seeking voluntary resignations from individuals serving as executive committee members of political parties and the staff of elected officials; and

Whereas, It is hoped that the Members of the Council of the City of New York will utilize the measures and adopt the standards outlined in the Report; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the borough presidents to adopt a series of best practices for recruitment and appointment to community boards.

AM
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4/7/2014