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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Voting Reform and Charter Revision Task Force
Tuesday, April 8, 2025 - 6:30 PM
Conducted remotely on Zoom

Please note: The resolutions contained in the committee minutes are recommendations submitted by the committee co-chairs to the Community Board. At the monthly full board meeting, the resolutions are discussed and voted upon by all members of Community Board 8 Manhattan.

Resolutions for Approval:

- Item 1A: The Language of Ballot Issues Should be Objective, Factual, and Accurate
- Item 1B: Preservation of Historic Districts
- Item 1C: Community Board Decisions Should not be Merely Advisory
- Item 1D: Need for an Urban Planner
- Item 1E: Elimination of Community Board Term Limits
- Item 1F: ULURP Process

MINUTES

Board Members Present: Michele Birnbaum, Alida Camp, Ed Hartzog (Co-chair), John McClement, Judy Schneider, Shari Weiner (Co-chair)

Approximate Number of Public Attendees: 9

The meeting was called to order at 6:30.

1. Review of topics proposed for inclusion in a resolution to the Charter Change Commission

Co-Chair Shari Weiner explained that the purpose of this meeting was to finalize the topics that the Task Force members wanted to make into resolutions to present to the Charter Revision Commissions. These resolutions will be presented to the Full Board on April 16th. By a unanimous vote, the Task Force members approved the following topics. Each topic would be a separate resolution:

- A. The Language of Ballot Issues Should be Objective, Factual, and Accurate
- B. Preservation of Historic Districts
- C. Community Board Decisions Should not be Merely Advisory
- D. Need for an Urban Planner
- E. Elimination of Community Board Term Limits
- F. ULURP Process

Shari will prepare the six resolutions which will be sent to the Task Force members for their revisions.

Ed made a recommendation that these resolutions be sent to both the Mayor's Charter Change Commission as well as the City Council Charter Commission. This was agreed to by the members of the Task Force.

The following six resolutions were unanimously approved by the members of the Task Force:

- A.) The Language of Ballot Issues Should be Objective, Factual, and Accurate

WHEREAS New York City ballot measures often deal with issues of city law and government that are complicated and/or unfamiliar to the general public; and

WHEREAS valid ballot measures should be presented to the public in a matter that enables voters to understand what they are voting on; and

WHEREAS descriptions of ballot measures should not promote a particular viewpoint or outcome but only state the facts;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that CB8M recommends that the Charter Revision Commission approve a ballot initiative to amend the New York City Charter to require that ballot measures be presented on the ballots objectively, factually, and accurately.

Board Members in Favor: 6-0-0-0 (Birnbaum, Camp, Hartzog, McClement, Schneider, Weiner)

B.) Preservation of Historic Districts

WHEREAS the purpose of a Historic District is to preserve and protect areas that have significant historical, architectural, cultural, or archaeological value; and

WHEREAS Historic Districts help maintain the character and the integrity of places that reflect important aspects of a community's past; and

WHEREAS Historic Districts protect unique or representative architectural styles and building technology that might otherwise be lost to modern development; and

WHEREAS Historic Districts foster a sense of pride, contributing to a community's unique identity, and continuity; and

WHEREAS preserving and reusing older buildings is often more environmentally sustainable than demolition and new construction;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that CB8M recommends that the Charter Revision Commission approve a ballot amendment that preserves the historic nature, cultural legacy, unique architectural styles, and significance of the geographic sizes of New York City's many Historic Districts; they should not be reduced in size to accommodate new development; the possibility of supporting new construction should not be considered as a criteria for establishing a reduced Historic District.

Board Members in Favor: 6-0-0-0 (Birnbaum, Camp, Hartzog, McClement, Schneider, Weiner)

C.) Community Board Decisions Should not be Merely Advisory

WHEREAS the purpose of New York City Community Boards is to serve as the official sounding-board through which community concerns and interests are disseminated and through which city services within the district are monitored; and

WHEREAS each of the city's Community Boards help shape the development and quality of life in its neighborhood by providing a platform for residents to voice their concerns and affect city decisions; and

WHEREAS while Community Boards have neither legislative nor enforcement powers, they serve as a crucial part of local democracy;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that CB8M recommends that the Charter Revision Commission approve a ballot initiative to amend the New York City Charter, stating that decisions of Community Boards should not be

advisory, but should be afforded the respect they deserve by giving them a weighted value in the decision-making process.

Board Members in Favor: 6-0-0-0 (Birnbaum, Camp, Hartzog, McClement, Schneider, Weiner)

D.) Need for an Urban Planner

WHEREAS Community Boards are asked to review land use applications, including zoning changes and new development plans through their role in the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP), thus playing a vital role in shaping local development; and

WHEREAS Community Boards would benefit from the expertise of a professional urban planner; and

WHEREAS Community Boards do not have the budget to engage their own urban planner;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that CB8M recommends that the Charter Revision Commission approve a ballot initiative to amend the New York City Charter to require that each Borough President retain the services of an urban planner whose services can be utilized by that borough's Community Boards, which would benefit from the expertise of an urban planner on development and other projects.

Board Members in Favor: 6-0-0-0 (Birnbaum, Camp, Hartzog, McClement, Schneider, Weiner)

E.) Elimination of Community Board Term Limits

WHEREAS as the result of a recent City Charter revision, the membership on Community Boards is term limited; and

WHEREAS long-serving Community Board members often have deep historical knowledge of zoning, development, and community issues that newcomers may lack; and

WHEREAS this expertise allows them to more effectively review complex land use proposals and advocate for the community; and

WHEREAS without term limits, Boards can maintain a stable leadership structure and avoid frequent turnover, which can disrupt the discussions of ongoing initiatives and stymie long-term planning; and

WHEREAS continuity ensures more effective relationships with city agencies, elected officials, and developers; and

WHEREAS experienced Board members, having built credibility and relationships over time, are often better equipped to challenge developers or city agencies when needed. Their knowledge of past battles and victories gives them a strategic advantage in dealing with ongoing concerns and long-term debates; and

WHEREAS because of resignations and other reasons, vacancies are normally filled by new, inexperienced members; and

WHEREAS rather than being term-limited, current members should be evaluated for re-appointment based on their contributions, attendance, community engagement, and knowledge;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that CB8M recommends that the City Charter Revision Commission approve a ballot initiative to amend the New York City Charter to eliminate term limits for members of Community Boards, thus keeping effective members and supporting good governance and representation.

Board Members in Favor: 6-0-0-0 (Birnbaum, Camp, Hartzog, McClement, Schneider, Weiner)

F.) ULURP Process

WHEREAS ULURP (the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure) is the official procedure that New York City uses to review and approve land use and zoning changes; and

WHEREAS these changes can include things like rezoning, special permits, site selections for public facilities, and major changes to city maps; and

WHEREAS ULURP provides for the inclusion of community voices and elected officials' and city agencies' input which are involved in the decision-making process; and

WHEREAS ULURP Applications are reviewed, as follows: Community Board, 60 days, Borough President, 30 days, City Planning Commission, 60 days, City Council, 50 days, and the Mayor, 5 days; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that CB8M recommends that the Charter Revision Commission approve a ballot initiative to amend the New York City Charter to ensure that review times for Community Boards and Borough Presidents not be reduced;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that as Community Boards do not meet in August, any ULURP applications submitted after July 1st should have Community Board review increased by 60 days.

Board Members in Favor: 6-0-0-0 (Birnbaum, Camp, Hartzog, McClement, Schneider, Weiner)

2. Old Business

No items of Old Business were discussed.

3. New Business

No items of New Business were discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:07 PM.

Sharon Weiner and Ed Hartzog, Co-Chairs