

**From:** Charter Revision Commission Press Office [<mailto:press@charter.nyc.gov>]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 17, 2018 11:30 AM  
**To:** Charter Revision Commission Press Office  
**Subject:** PRESS RELEASE: NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION RELEASES PRELIMINARY STAFF REPORT



**IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** July 17, 2018  
**CONTACT:** [press@charter.nyc.gov](mailto:press@charter.nyc.gov), (617) 733-6891

## **NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION RELEASES PRELIMINARY STAFF REPORT**

### **Report Highlights Potential Reforms in Campaign Finance, Municipal Elections, Civic Engagement, Community Boards and Redistricting**

*Public Invited to Comment on Report at Upcoming Hearings in All Five Boroughs  
Before Commission Decides on Ballot Proposals*

**NEW YORK, NY-** Following hearings across all five boroughs and testimony from members of the public, experts, elected officials, good government groups, and academics, the New York City Charter Revision Commission released its Preliminary Staff Report today. The recommendations will serve as a guide for the Commission as it reviews the entire Charter and develops final ballot proposals to be decided by voters at this November's general election. Recommendations broadly fall into five policy areas: campaign finance, municipal elections, civic engagement, community boards and redistricting. Testimony was received at public hearings, expert forums, via the Commission's online comment portal, and through mail and email submissions.

Commission staff recommended the following:

- **Campaign Finance:** Staff recommends that the Commission strongly consider developing a ballot proposal to reduce contribution limits, strengthen public financing, and increase the cap on public matching funds.
- **Municipal Elections:** Staff recommends that the Commission continue to study and review a variety of proposals to increase voter participation, with particular attention

given to instant runoff voting and increased language assistance services. Staff also recommends that the Commission consider reforms that promote civic engagement as a means of increasing voter participation.

- **Civic Engagement:** Staff recommends that the Commission further study ways to strengthen the City's efforts to engage its residents in civic activities, including through possibly establishing a new entity or office charged with that purpose. Staff recommends that the Commission solicit further input on: (1) how such an entity or office could support, supplement, or coordinate the City's existing efforts in this area, including the recently announced DemocracyNYC initiative; (2) how such an entity or office could facilitate the expansion of participatory budgeting; (3) where such an entity or office should be situated; and (4) whether such an entity or office should have an independent, non-partisan or other structure.
- **Community Boards:** Staff recommends that the Commission further consider proposals to (1) impose term limits for Community Board Members as a method to increase diversity; (2) standardize and enhance the appointment process; (3) provide additional support and resources to Community Boards, particularly in the context of urban planning; and (4) adopt methods to ensure that Community Boards are representative of the communities that they serve.
- **The Districting Process (Redistricting):** Staff notes the complexity of this issue and recommends continued study of: (1) procedures to address the effects of the districting process on the voting power of racial and ethnic minority groups, such as providing for an additional review and analysis of proposed lines by an independent expert, or other changes that are reflective of the important public policy goals underlying the Voting Rights Act and the former DOJ pre-clearance process; (2) alterations to the structure of the Districting Commission to promote its independence and reduce the influence of elected officials; and (3) strategies to counteract the negative effects of an undercount in the next census on the districting process.

**Cesar Perales, the Commission's Chair, said:** "I'd like to thank all of the New Yorkers who came out to the hearings to discuss how we can improve civic life in New York City. New Yorkers have been engaged since the start of this process and this report reflects the wide range of issues we discussed in all five boroughs. Now, the Commission is going to get back to work meeting with New Yorkers at another round of hearings to discuss this report and ultimately will issue a final report and proposals to put before the voters in the fall."

**Rachel Godsil, the Commission's Vice-Chair, said:** "This Preliminary Staff Report is an important step in the Charter revision process. With the report as a guide, we now resume the critical work of engaging the public in a meaningful dialogue on the issues presented in the document. I am looking forward to a series of robust and energetic conversations with New Yorkers."

**Carlo Scissura, the Commission’s Secretary, said:** “This Preliminary Staff Report describes a set of issues that go to the heart of civic life in New York City. I am thankful to the Commission staff for producing this thoughtful and comprehensive analysis and am looking forward to further public discussion of issues relating to campaign finance, municipal elections, community boards, civic engagement and redistricting.”

**Matt Gewolb, the Commission’s Executive Director said:** “This Preliminary Staff Report reflects a focus on civic life and democracy in New York City—a theme that is particularly appropriate and relevant in contemporary times. The report also introduces a new and exciting phase in our process—one that I am confident will include a robust public discussion and debate about the future of the City Charter.”

The public is invited to provide their ideas and comments regarding the Charter and the preliminary report. To help facilitate this process, the Charter Revision Commission is hosting “Charter Week,” a series of public hearings in each of the five boroughs. The public is encouraged to attend and offer testimony to the Commission about the report and on any aspect of the Charter. As a part of “Charter Week,” Commissioners and staff will host additional events to solicit further input on revising the Charter. The hearing schedule is available below and at [nyc.gov/charter](http://nyc.gov/charter). The public can also submit testimony and comments by email ([comments@charter.nyc.gov](mailto:comments@charter.nyc.gov)), through the Commission’s website and over social media.

- **Public Commission Meeting to Discuss Preliminary Staff Report**
  - WHEN: Tuesday, July 17, 2018 at 11AM
  - WHERE: Pratt Institute Manhattan Campus, 144 West 14th Street, Room 213, New York, NY 10011
  - Directions: Take the 1, 2, 3 train to 14th Street
- **Community Event: Greenmarket (Staten Island)**
  - WHEN: Saturday, July 21, 2018 from 9AM-11AM
  - WHERE: St George Greenmarket, St Marks Pl & Hyatt St, Staten Island, NY 10301
  - Directions: Take the Ferry to St. George
- **Public Hearing (Manhattan)**
  - WHEN: Monday, July 23, 2018 at 6PM
  - WHERE: New York University’s Vanderbilt Hall, 40 Washington Square South, Greenberg Lounge, New York, NY 10012
  - Directions: Take the A, C, or E train to West 4th St, Washington Square Station
- **Public Hearing (Bronx)**
  - WHEN: Tuesday, July 24, 2018 at 6PM
  - WHERE: Hostos Community College, 120 East 149th Street, 2nd Floor, Bronx, NY 10451
  - Directions: Take the 4, 5, 6, or 2 train to 149 St. – Grand Concourse
- **Community Event: Greenmarket (Queens)**
  - WHEN: Wednesday, July 25, 2018 from 9AM-11AM
  - WHERE: Astoria Greenmarket, 14th St & 31st Ave & 31st Road, Queens, NY 11106
  - Directions: Take the N or W to 30th Ave
- **Public Hearing (Brooklyn)**

- WHEN: Wednesday, July 25, 2018 at 6PM
- WHERE: St. Francis College, 180 Remsen St, Brooklyn, NY 11201
- Directions: Take the 2, 3, 4, or 5 train to Borough Hall; or the R train to Court St.; or the A, C to Jay St. – MetroTech Station
- **Public Hearing (Queens)**
  - WHEN: Thursday, July 26, 2018 at 6PM
  - WHERE: Queens Borough Hall, 120-55 Queens Blvd, Kew Gardens, NY 11424
  - Directions: Take the E train to Union Turnpike – Kew Gardens Station
- **Public Hearing (Staten Island)**
  - WHEN: Tuesday, July 31, 2018 at 6:30PM
  - WHERE: McKee High School, 290 St. Marks Place, Auditorium, Staten Island, NY 10301
  - Directions: After leaving the Staten Island terminal, head northwest. Turn right toward Wall St., turn left onto Wall St., and turn left onto St. Marks Place

“Charter Week” builds on the Commission’s extensive public outreach campaign to ensure all communities throughout New York have access to the Commission revision process. New Yorkers provided comments and ideas for revising the Charter at public hearings held in all five boroughs. Issue forums provided the Commission with more in-depth information related to focus areas. All events were open to the public and live streamed over the internet. Language translation services, ASL interpreters, and L.O.O.P devices were provided. All events were held at accessible spaces. Testimony was also received at additional community forums, tabling events, including targeted efforts to engage youth, immigrant New Yorkers, and veterans, as well as through mail and email submissions and over social media.

The public was alerted to the Commission’s public meetings through advertising in community and ethnic papers, and utilizing messages through organizations with large distribution lists. Notice was given to every Community Board, as well as City, State, and Federal elected officials. Media advisories were issued to a list of more than 3,000 people at least twice per public meeting. Public notices for each meeting were published in the City Record and made available on the Commission’s website. All notices were translated into several languages: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (Mandarin, Cantonese), French, Haitian Creole, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, and Urdu.