

# 1989 Retrospective

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**NEW YORK**  
**LAW SCHOOL**

| Center for New York  
City and State Law

New York City  
Independent  
Budget Office



## Sections

- 1 1989 Background & Context
- 2 Road to Charter Revision
- 3 Aftermath of 1989

# Pre-Election 1989 At A Glance

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- **Mayor of New York City**
  - Edward Koch
- **Comptroller**
  - Harrison (“Jay”) Goldin
- **Borough Presidents**
  - Manhattan: David Dinkins
  - The Bronx: Fernando Ferrer
  - Brooklyn: Howard Golden
  - Queens: Claire Shulman
  - Staten Island: Ralph Lamberti
- **City Council: 35 members**
  - President: Andrew Stein
- **City Planning Commission: 7 members**
- **Community Boards: 59**



Times Square at night in 1989.

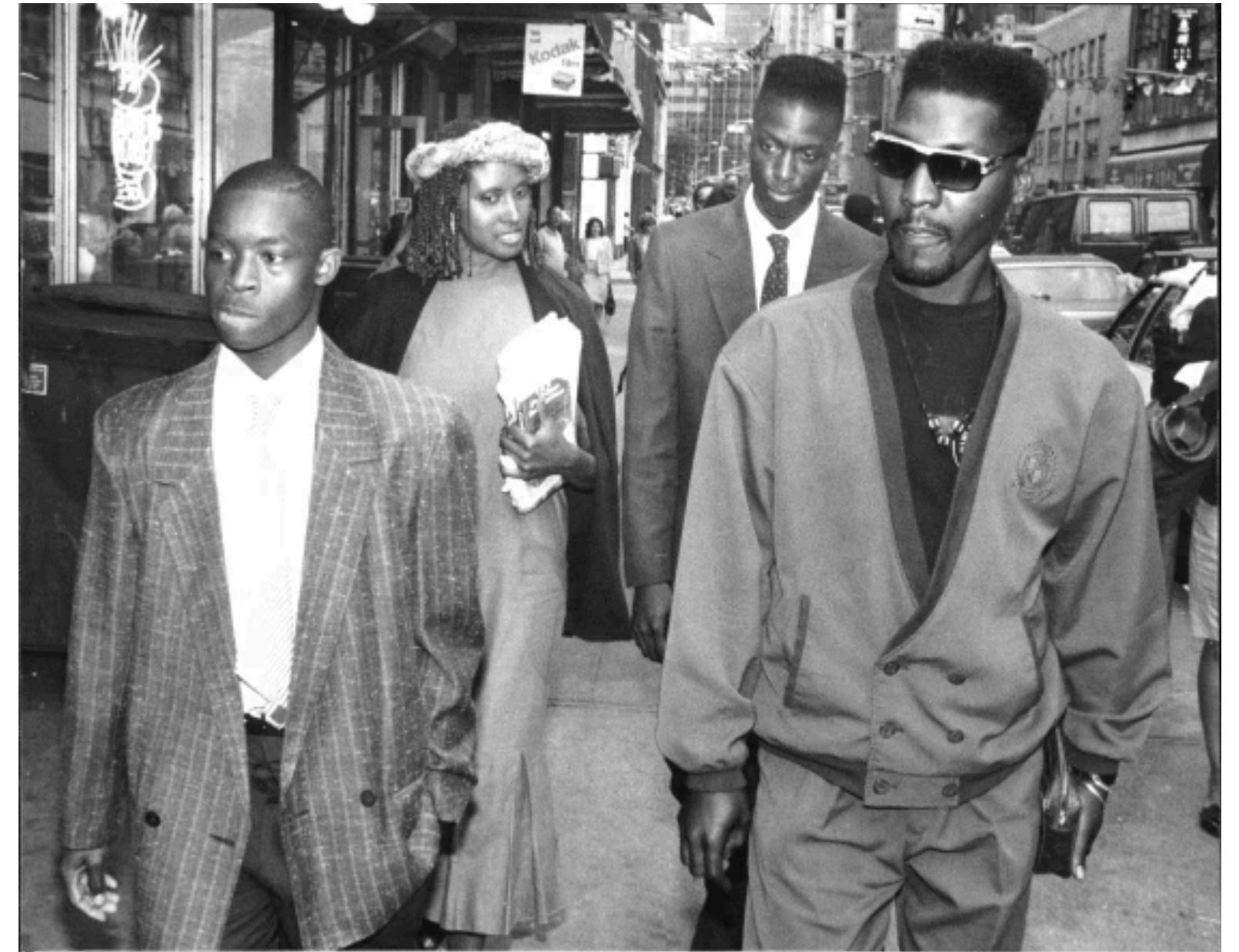
Source: Frank Picard



# May 10, 1989

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- Antron McCray, Kevin Richardson, Raymond Santana, Korey Wise, and Yusef Salaam (known as the Central Park Five) are indicted.
- Trials begin in 1990; sentences are not vacated until 2002.
- As of January 1st, 2024, City Councilmember Yusef Salaam represents the 9th District.



Pictured: Councilmember Salaam (back right) and Mcray (front left)

Source: Getty Images



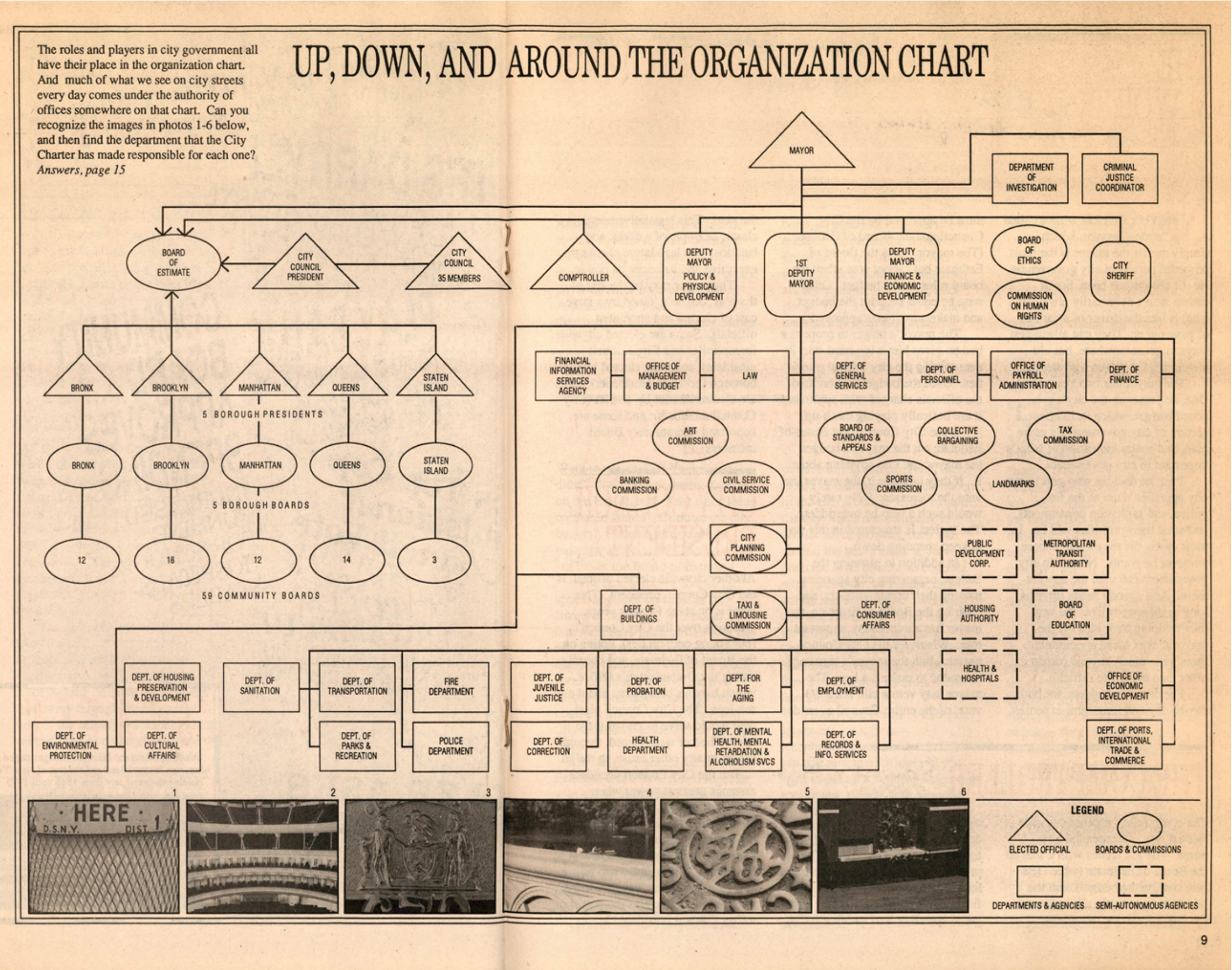
# September 14, 1989

- Activists from the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) New York chain themselves to the VIP balcony of the New York Stock Exchange to protest price inflation on AZT, which at the time was the only FDA-approved drug for AIDS treatment.





# Structure of City Government, Pre-1989

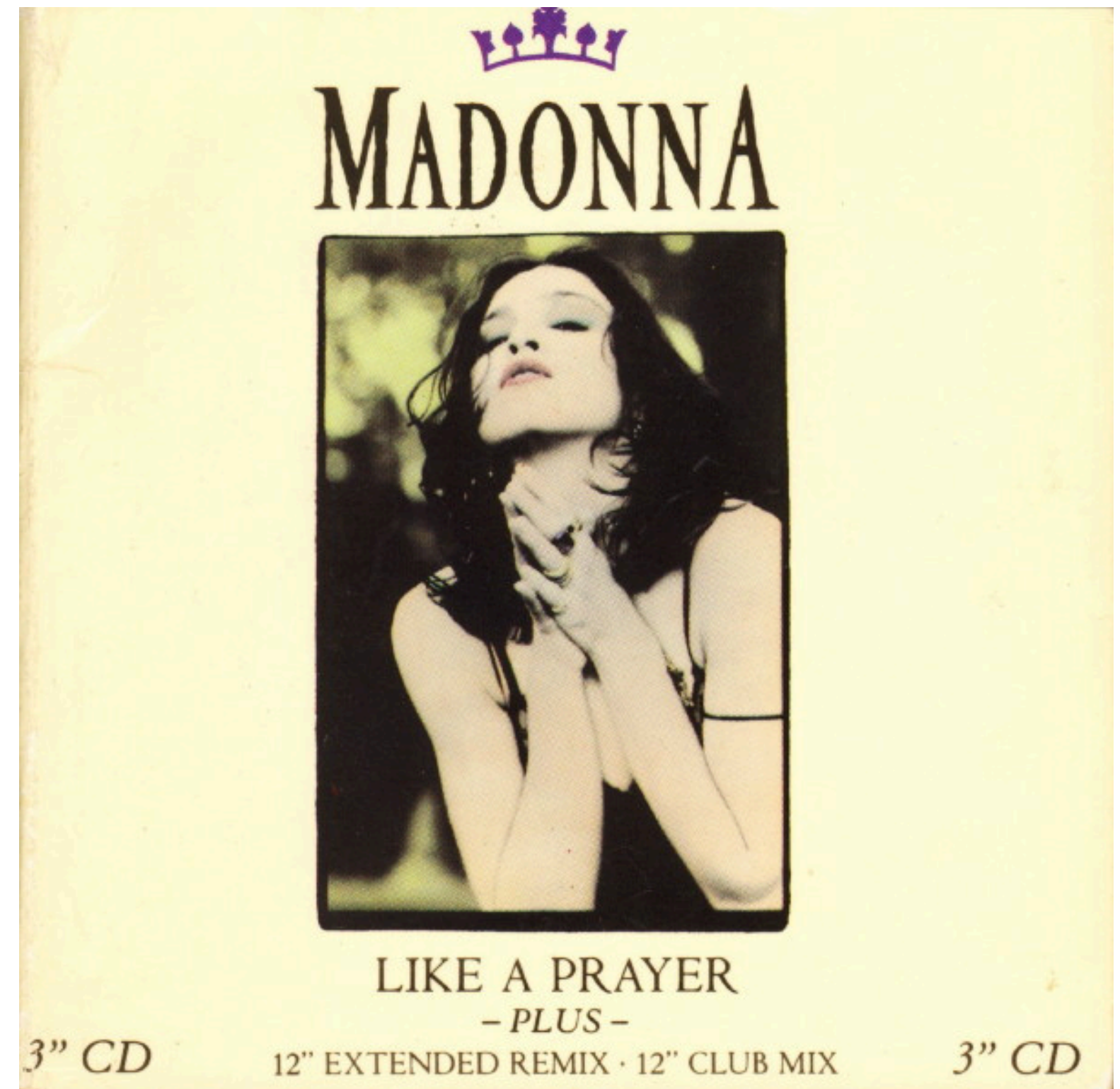




# Music Highlight

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- Madonna's "Like a Prayer" tops the Billboard Hot 100 for the first time, becoming her 7th song to hit No. 1 on the chart.



Source: Warner Bros.

# Movie Highlight

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- Tim Burton's *Batman* is officially released in theaters.
- It becomes the highest grossing film of the year in the United States.



Source: Warner Bros.



## TV Highlight

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- *Seinfeld* premieres with a viewership of 15.4 million.



Source: NBC & Everett Collection

# January 20, 1989

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- The new Charter Revision Commission, chaired by Frederick (“Fritz”) Schwarz, holds its first meeting.
- The former Commission, chaired by Richard (“Dick”) Ravitch, had paused work in November of 1988.

Commission Chair:  
**Fritz Schwarz**

Vice Chair:  
**Harriet Michel**

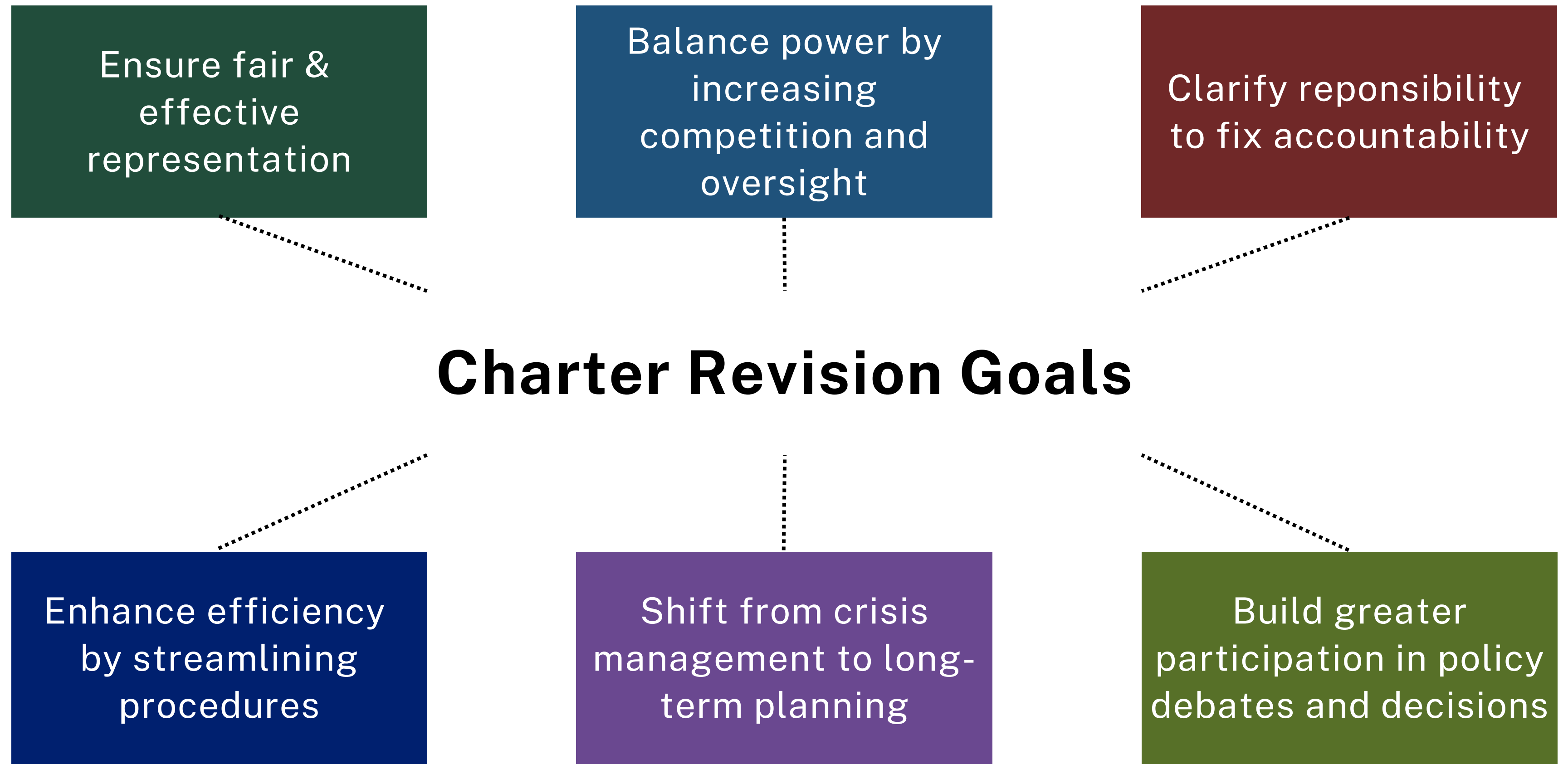
Executive Director  
& Counsel:  
**Eric Lane**

Deputy Director:  
**Linda Lange**

Research Director:  
**Frank Mauro**

Communications &  
Community Relations  
Director:  
**Gretchen Dykstra**





Public Meetings  
& Hearings Held  
by Commission  
in 1989

- 14 Manhattan
- 6 Brooklyn
- 3 Staten Island
- 3 Queens
- 3 The Bronx





# Debates over Revision Timetable

“There is enough time to resolve the issues that are before us, and I think it is in the interests of New York City to move out from under a constitutional cloud in a timely fashion and at an election which is certain to have a substantial turnout.”

- *Councilmember Ruth W. Messenger of Citizens for Charter Change*

## Charter Panel Facing More Pressure to Delay Vote

By ALAN FINDER

A disparate group of New Yorkers, from real-estate developers to a former mayor and City Council president to members of black and Hispanic civic groups, is demanding that the commission rewriting the City Charter postpone a referendum on a new municipal government scheduled for November.

Many of those who have been calling for delay in recent weeks differ markedly on the shape they think a new government should take.

Some want the Charter Revision Commission to recommend more initiatives to empower the city's minorities. Others say

the panel should give more power to the five borough presidents.

Most of those advocating a slowdown contend publicly, at least, that they are concerned more about process than substance. The charter commission should postpone the referendum until November 1990, many say, so New Yorkers will have enough time to understand the issues under consideration and to participate in the debate.

An informal coalition formed by Percy E. Sutton, the former Manhattan Borough President, Paul O'Dwyer, the former City Council president, and Lewis Rudin, the developer, are threatening to sue to block the referendum this year. "We think the

substance is so confusing to the public that they cannot be knowledgeable," Mr. Sutton said. "There ought to be a review, a knowledgeable review, by the public, and the current timetable would not allow that."

### Panel Is Refining Proposals

The demands have put additional pressures on the 15 unpaid volunteers of the charter commission, who already confront civic groups and public officials divided bitterly over the substance of their proposals. The panel has recommended the abolition of the city's Board of Estimate and the reassignment among the mayor, an expanded City Council and

a new City Planning Commission of the board's powers over the budget, land use and city contracts and franchises.

The charter commission members contend they are making progress in refining their proposals. They say the public has had significant opportunities for involvement in dozens of private discussions with commission and staff members and in more than 45 hours of public hearings held in each borough earlier this month.

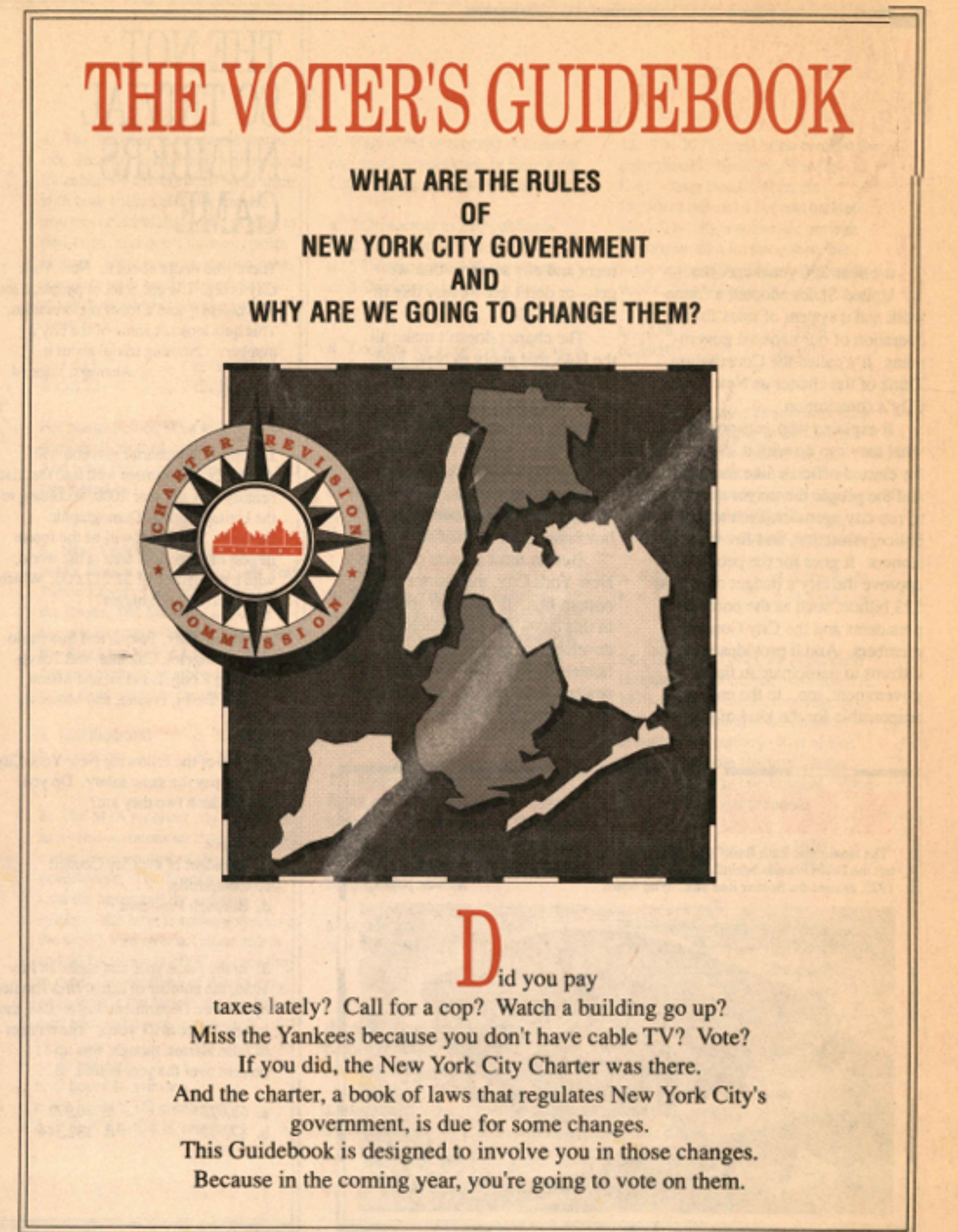
The commission also decided two weeks ago to alter its timetable, delaying for a month — until early August — the completion of its proposals so New Yorkers

Continued on Page B4

Source: New York Times

## Voter Outreach

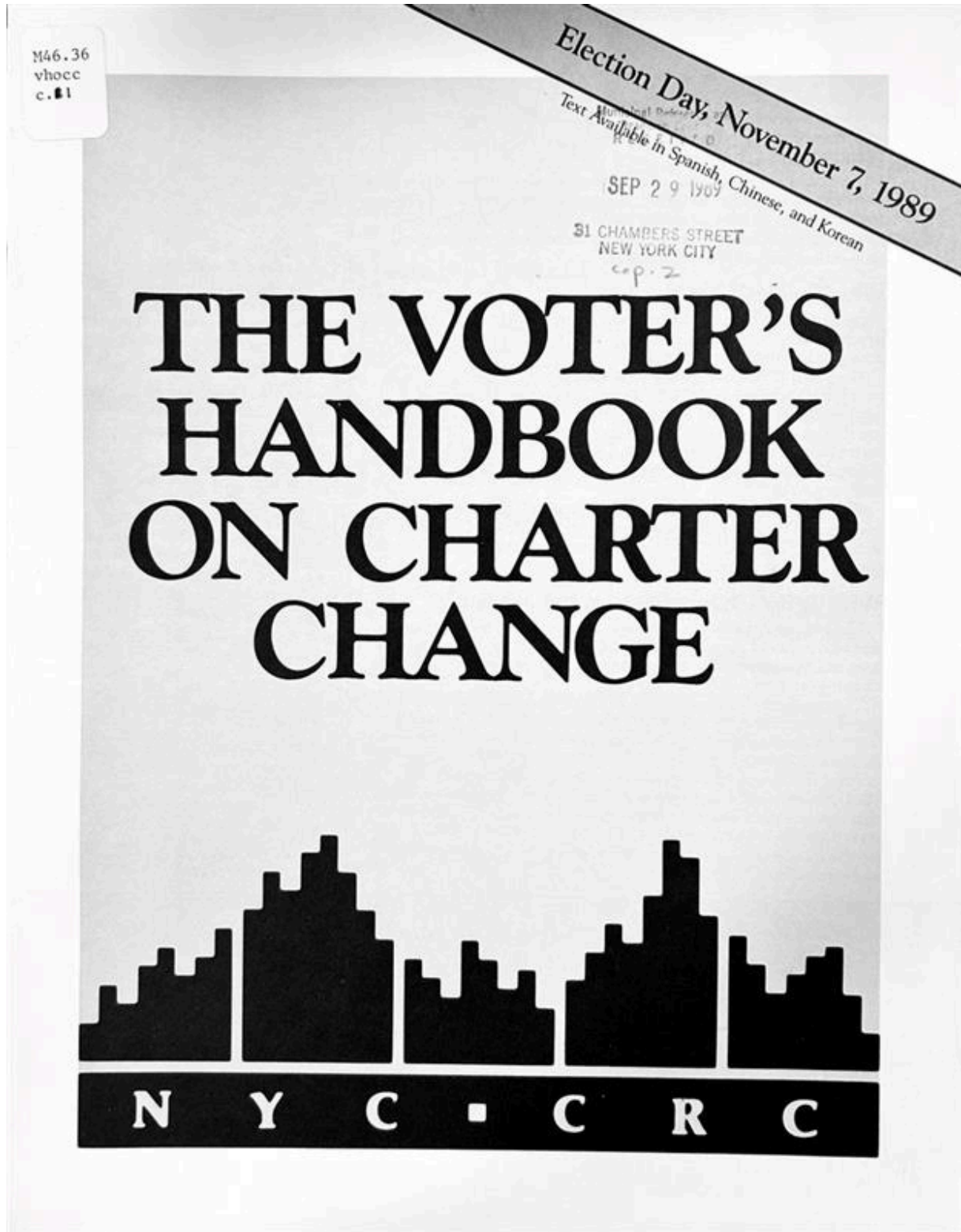
- Guidebooks were distributed to voters in the months leading up to the election, providing information on the proposed Charter revisions.
  - Pictured: A page in the Voter's Guidebook. Scan is from 1988 but page was republished in 1989 Guidebook.



Source: NYC Municipal Archives



# Voter Outreach



Source: NYC Municipal Library



## August 2, 1989

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- The Charter Revision Commission votes 11-4 in favor of the final package of Charter Revision proposals.
- The Commission unanimously votes to approve the questions that will go on the ballot in November.

### Question 2

**Should the changes to the City Charter, as proposed by the Charter Revision Commission, be adopted?**

### Question 3

**Should the changes to the City Charter, as proposed by the Charter Revision Commission, relating to landmarks preservation be adopted?**

\* Question 1 addressed the State Constitution.

## September 12, 1989

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- David Dinkins beats Ed Koch in Democratic mayoral primary with 50.71% of the vote.
- Other candidates were Jay Goldin (Comptroller) and Richard Ravitch (1988 Charter Revision Commission Chair).
- Pictured right: Mayor Ed Koch and then-City Clerk David Dinkins in 1983, courtesy of NYC Municipal Archives.



# October 19, 1989

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## Organizations voicing official support for the Charter Revision

- AFSCME District Council 37
- The Benjamin Franklin Reform Democratic Club (Bronx)
- Black & Hispanic Caucus of the New York City Council
- Citizens' Budget Commission
- Citizens Union
- Lambda Independent Democrats (Brooklyn)
- League of Women Voters
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- National Ethnic Coalition Organization
- National Organization for Women (NOW) NYC
- Natural Resources Defense Council
- New York Building Congress
- New York City Partnership/Chamber of Commerce
- New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)
- North Bronx Social Action
- Women's City Club



# November 7, 1989

- Election Day: Voters affirm the Charter Revision.
- David Dinkins wins the mayoral election, becoming the first Black Mayor of New York City.



***DINKINS DEFEATS GIULLANI IN A CLOSE RACE;  
WILDER SEEMS VIRGINIA WINNER, FLORIO IN;  
VOTERS, BY 5-4, APPROVE NEW YORK CHARTER***

## December 13, 1989

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- United States Department of Justice approves the proposed revisions to the City Charter, ruling that the changes would not diminish the voting power of minorities.

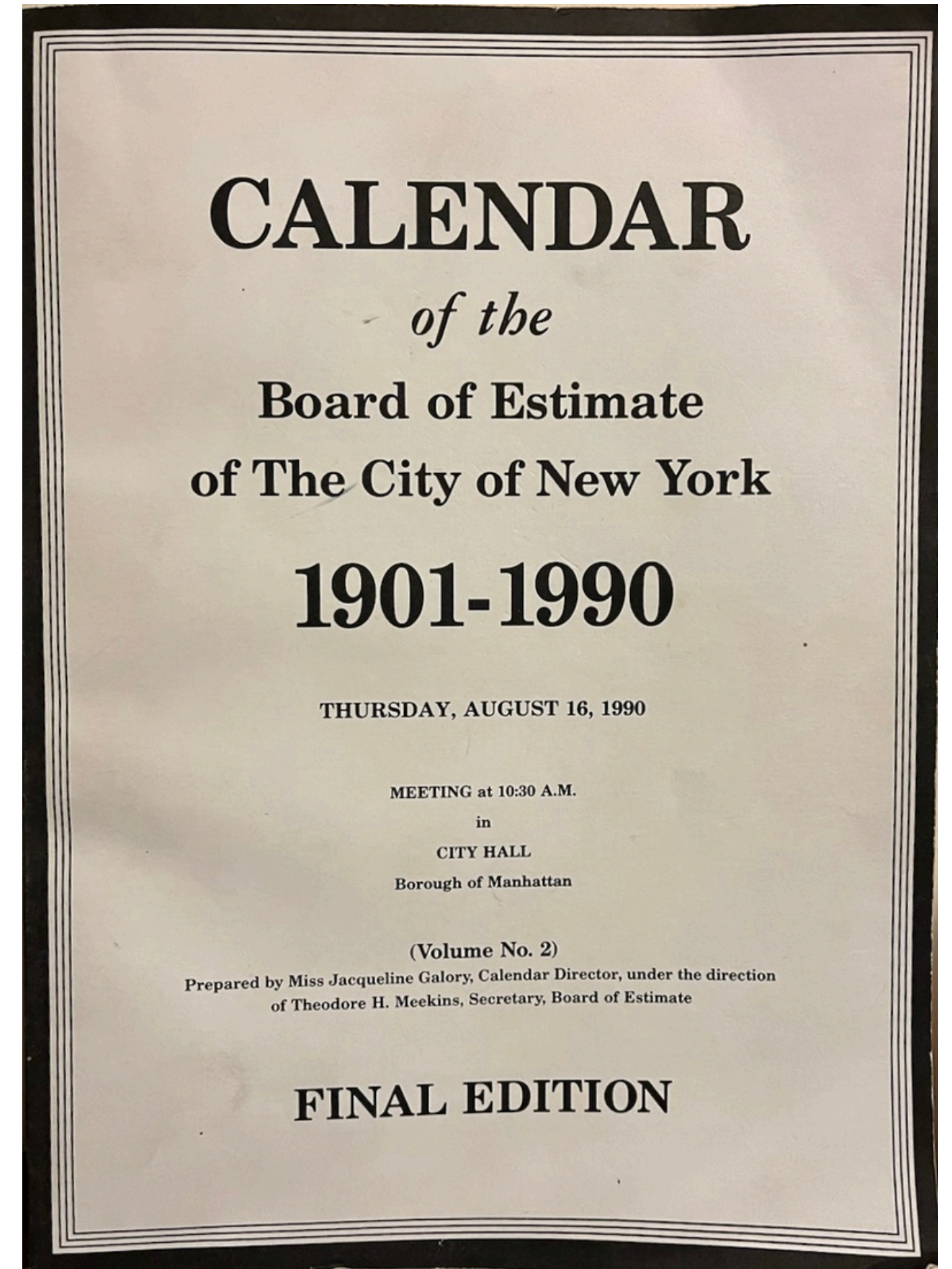
***New York City Charter Revision  
Approved by Justice Department  
Transition to New Government Is to Begin Jan. 1***

Source: New York Times



# The Final Days of the Board of Estimate

Pictured right: the final Board of Estimate Calendar, published August 16, 1990.



Source: Marla Simpson



# September 1, 1990

After approximately 90 years of governance, the New York City Board of Estimate is officially dissolved.

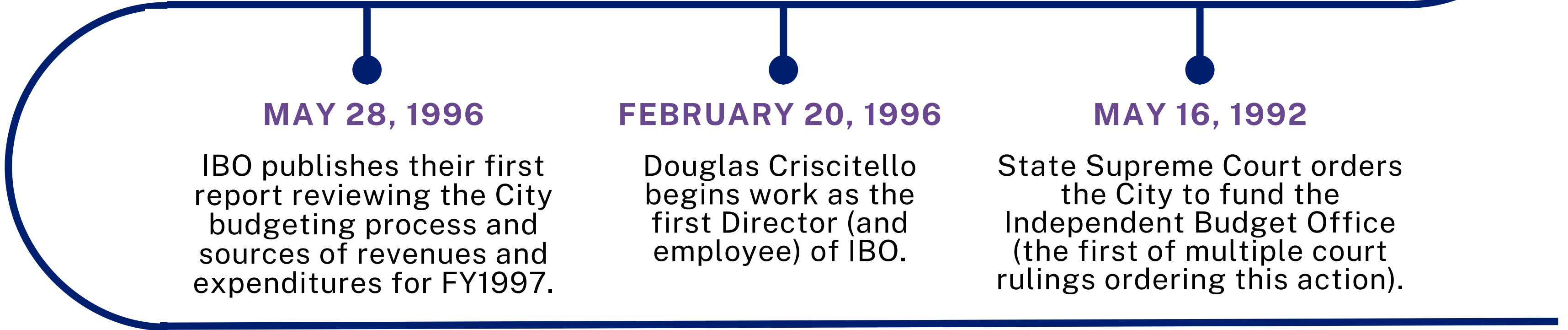


Source: New York Newsday



# Creating the Independent Budget Office

## PROPOSED TIMELINE



## ACTUAL TIMELINE