

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND ETHICS

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CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND ETHICS

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December 9, 2025

Start: 3:17 p.m.

Recess: 3:45 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - 8TH FLOOR - HEARING  
ROOM 3

B E F O R E: Sandra Ung, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Diana Ayala  
David M. Carr  
Eric Dinowitz  
Crystal Hudson

1 COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND ETHICS

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2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Testing, testing. This  
3 is a microphone check for the New York City Council  
4 Committee on Standards and Ethics. Today's date is  
5 December 9, 2025. We are currently in 250 Broadway,  
6 Hearing Room 3. This is being recorded by Sergeant  
7 Ben Levy.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon, and  
9 welcome to the New York City Council hearing of the  
10 Committee on Standards and Ethics.

11 At this time can everybody please silence  
12 your cell phones.

13 Chair, we are ready to begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Good afternoon. I'm  
15 Sandra Ung, Chair of the Committee on Standards and  
16 Ethics. I'm joined by my Colleagues, Deputy Speaker  
17 Diana Ayala and Council Members David Carr, Eric  
18 Dinowitz, and Crystal Hudson.

19 The Committee on Standards and Ethics is  
20 meeting today regarding the multiple alleged  
21 violations of Section 1060 of the Rules of the  
22 Council. It is necessary for the Committee to discuss  
23 confidential personnel issues, therefore I'm making a  
24 motion for the Committee to move into Executive  
25

2 Session pursuant to Section 105 of the New York State  
3 Public Officers Law.

4 All those in favor say aye.

5 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Aye.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Aye.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Aye.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Aye.

9 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Noting that the ayes  
10 have it, I'm now going to close this portion of the  
11 meeting and reopen in Executive Session. I ask that  
12 all Subcommittee Staff clear the room. I also ask  
13 that Sergeant-at-Arms stop taping this portion of the  
14 meeting.

15 If Executive Session results in a  
16 decision to consider further and reconvene, we will  
17 not return. We will simply let the Sergeant-at-Arms  
18 know that we are not returning.

19 If Executive Session results in a vote,  
20 we will return to Regular Session to report the vote  
21 when Executive Session concludes.

22 Good afternoon. I'm Sandra Ung, Chair of  
23 the Committee on Standards and Ethics. I am again  
24 joined by my Colleagues, Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala,  
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2 Council Members David Carr, Eric Dinowitz, and  
3 Crystal Hudson.

4               Because it was necessary for the  
5 Committee to discuss confidential personnel issues in  
6 conjunction with a pending disciplinary matter, the  
7 Committee voted to move into Executive Session  
8 pursuant to Section 105 of the Public Officers Law.  
9 The Committee is now returning to Open Session to  
10 make public the outcome of today's vote.

11              After an independent investigation  
12 conducted by Special Counsel retained by the  
13 Committee to investigate the conduct of Council  
14 Member Inna Vernikov October 12, 2023, the Committee  
15 voted to not open the matter against Council Member  
16 Vernikov for her conduct during the public assembly  
17 on October 12, 2023. However, as the Chair of this  
18 Committee, I issue the following statement.

19              Following the October 7, 2023, attack on  
20 Israel by Hamas, a pro-Palestinian student protest  
21 was held at CUNY's Brooklyn College on October 12,  
22 2023. On that same day, it was widely reported on  
23 various news outlets and social media that Council  
24 Member Inna Vernikov was present at the protest with  
25 what was believed to be a firearm near her waist

area, the grip of which became visible to the protesters and members of the public. It was further reported that during the protest, she directed various inflammatory statements to the protesters, including, you are nothing short of a terrorist without the bombs, baby killers, and your Hamas. A video of her making the comments was later posted to her government social media accounts. On October 13, 2023, the New York City Police Department obtained what was believed to be a firearm from Council Member Wernicke's home, and she was issued a ticket to appear in court. October 26, 2023, the Brooklyn District Attorney charged her with felony criminal possession of a weapon in a sensitive location under Penal Law Section 265.01E1 for allegedly bringing a firearm to a gathering of individuals collectively expressing their constitutional rights to protest or assemble. On November 17, 2023, the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office dismissed the charge against her, stating that the firearm was missing the spring recoil assembly, rendering it inoperable. After receiving numerous complaints on March 11, 2024, this Committee voted to authorize independent investigation into the circumstances surrounding City

Council Member Vernikov's conduct at the public assembly. At the conclusion of this investigation, she was given several opportunities to apologize for her conduct, including taking accountability for her presence at the protest with a firearm, the grip of which might become visible to the protesters and other members of the public, and the chilling effect that such presence may have had on their First Amendment rights. However, to date, she has failed to offer an apology to the satisfaction of the majority of the Members of this Committee. While the Standards and Ethics Committee unanimously voted today not to open a matter against Council Member Vernikov for her conduct during the public assembly, as Chair of this Committee, it is incumbent upon me to speak on behalf and express the majority's deep disappointment with Council Member Vernikov's conduct on October 12, 2023. As an elected official, she's entrusted with the responsibility of serving the public and upholding the integrity of the New City Council. Although the Brooklyn District Attorney was unable to hold her criminally liable, possessing what appeared to be a firearm in a public assembly is not only reckless, but a grave violation of the trust placed

in public officials. Carrying a weapon, operable or not, into public assembly undermines the very principles of democracy and free expression. Public assemblies are a cornerstone of a democratic society, providing citizens with a safe space to voice their concerns and advocate for justice. The introduction of a firearm into this environment can be viewed as a threat of violence that erodes the sanctity of that space and may have escalated tensions, endanger lives, and convey a message of intimidation rather than leadership. The duties of elected office demand respect for the rights of all citizens and a commitment to public safety. By bringing a firearm to a public assembly, Council Member Vernikov demonstrated a brazen disregard for both. The public deserves leaders who embody integrity, responsibility, and respect for laws and democratic freedoms. Anything less erodes the foundation of our civic life.

And now I'd like to turn it over to Council Member Hudson to make her statement.

COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you so much, Chair Ung, for the opportunity to provide a brief statement.

As Members of the City Council, we represent not only our constituents but also the government of the City of New York. As such, New Yorkers hold us to a higher standard of decorum and we have a duty to hold ourselves to that standard. Given this, Council Member Vernikov's conduct and her continued refusal to take accountability for that conduct, as the Chair mentioned, is deeply troubling and clearly unfit for a member of this body. To be clear, I'm not condemning the Council Member's decision to own a firearm. She holds a New York State concealed carry permit and is legally allowed to carry one on her person in accordance with the terms of federal and state law. If she had decided to bring her firearm to a non-sensitive area, we would have never conducted this extensive investigation. However, following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in Brune, New York State passed regulations prohibiting firearms in certain sensitive locations such as, quote, any gathering of individuals to collectively express their constitutional rights to protest or assemble, end quote. As an elected official in the City of New York, a permitted gun owner, and an attorney admitted to the New York State



Bar, it is highly doubtful Council Member Vernikov would not be fully aware of these limitations, limitations she made a conscious decision to disregard when she attended a non-violent student protest with her concealed firearm and a protest about one of the most politically and emotionally charged issues of the last few years, a protest at which she knew she held opposite beliefs of the young people protesting. As we live through a time of extreme divisiveness, it is even more important that we as elected officials set an example for our constituents. We can hold differing opinions and disagree passionately, but those disagreements must never be accompanied by the specter of violence, especially gun violence. We must ensure New Yorkers can engage in their First Amendment rights in a peaceful and respectful manner. I would also be remiss not to name the reality of what happened that day and what could have happened should Council Member Vernikov looked more like me. If I or any of my Black and Brown colleagues had shown up to a campus protest with a visible firearm, it is hard to imagine the situation unfolding without immediate police intervention or serious incident. Yet Council

Member Vernikov was able to attend the protest, return home safely, and was only approached by the NYPD days later with her attorney present. This disparity matters, and it cannot be ignored.

As elected officials, we carry a responsibility to conduct ourselves in ways that respect the safety and well-being of our constituents and preserve our democratic process. It is my sincere hope that Council Member Vernikov has come to better understand this as a result of this ordeal and that this Committee will not be called upon to address a case like this again.

And lastly, I'd like to apologize to all of the people who were impacted, who were traumatized from this experience because I know they will not get that from Council Member Vernikov. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you, Council Member Hudson, and I'd like to turn it over to Council Member Carr.

COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Thank you, Chair. While I support today's decision, I must respectfully disagree with the accompanying statement. Since the events of October 12, 2023, Council Member Inna Vernikov has never been found to engage in any

criminal wrongdoing and any charges previously levied against her were dropped after a thorough law enforcement investigation. There is also no evidence to suggest that Council Member Vernikov intentionally displayed a firearm while at this protest or that she intended to threaten or intended to cause any concern whatsoever in the protesters or other attendees by her presence. Indeed, the accompanying statement is not suggesting otherwise, but rather conceptually that it is inappropriate for someone, except perhaps outside of law enforcement or security personnel, to carry a firearm to a protest even if they have a permit and even if the firearm is not functional and regardless of whether perhaps the firearm becomes visible or not. Council Member Vernikov and many other New Yorkers have concealed carry permits for registered firearms for a number of legitimate ends, but in large part for the purpose of self-defense. Does the need that motivates concealed carry permit holders end because the New York State Legislature decides that it does, simply by deeming any public gathering under our right of assembly too sensitive for legal possessors of firearms to attend while carrying? Ironically, such a standard would prevent a

legal gun owner from exercising their Second Amendment rights while attending a First Amendment protected rally in favor of those same two-way rights. Are our rights more secure when legislative enactments seek to pit those rights we have under one part of the Constitution against those we possess according to another? On the contrary, the text of the Second Amendment makes clear the framers' belief that an individual right to legal gun ownership is a necessary condition for the other freedoms we are so blessed to enjoy. It is based on this concept and the case of *Wolford v. Lopez*, now pending before the Supreme Court of the United States, that I believe restrictions like this that we have here in New York may not endure judicial scrutiny.

I agree with my Colleagues that we as elected officials should be held to a higher standard, but I also believe strongly that elected officials enjoy the same rights as our fellow Americans. Given that there's been no wrongdoing, either criminally or more generally, by Council Member Vernikov, I agree that this is not a matter that warrants further review or consideration by this

Committee, but I cannot join today's statement. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you, Council Member Carr, and now I'd like to turn it over to Deputy Speaker Ayala.

COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: I think that the statement that we all agreed to give was a unanimously agreed upon release, and I just want to align myself with Council Member Hudson's remarks. Had this situation played out differently, had it been, you know, a member of color, this whole scenario could have been very differently. I believe that Council Member Vernikov is smart enough to know that you should never carry a gun on school premises, that it is illegal to do so. She's a lawyer. She should know that. There's no excuse for not knowing that, but I think that, to me, the most insulting part of all of this is the resistance to issue a simple apology and say I should not have walked into that space with a gun that day, and so, you know, as Council Member Hudson said, I also would like to issue an apology because I find it appalling, and I think that you're, you know, everyone that was there that day is owed an apology. Thank you.

1 COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND ETHICS

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2 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you.

3 Today's public hearing has ended. Thank  
4 you. [GAVEL]

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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 December 28, 2025