

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

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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

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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

2 area, the grip of which became visible to the
3 protesters and members of the public. It was further
4 reported that during the protest, she directed
5 various inflammatory statements to the protesters,
6 including, you are nothing short of a terrorist
7 without the bombs, baby killers, and your Hamas. A
8 video of her making the comments was later posted to
9 her government social media accounts. On October 13,
10 2023, the New York City Police Department obtained
11 what was believed to be a firearm from Council Member
12 Wernicke's home, and she was issued a ticket to
13 appear in court. October 26, 2023, the Brooklyn
14 District Attorney charged her with felony criminal
15 possession of a weapon in a sensitive location under
16 Penal Law Section 265.01E1 for allegedly bringing a
17 firearm to a gathering of individuals collectively
18 expressing their constitutional rights to protest or
19 assemble. On November 17, 2023, the Brooklyn District
20 Attorney's Office dismissed the charge against her,
21 stating that the firearm was missing the spring
22 recoil assembly, rendering it inoperable. After
23 receiving numerous complaints on March 11, 2024, this
24 Committee voted to authorize independent
25 investigation into the circumstances surrounding City

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2 Council Member Vernikov's conduct at the public

3 assembly. At the conclusion of this investigation,

4 she was given several opportunities to apologize for

5 her conduct, including taking accountability for her

6 presence at the protest with a firearm, the grip of

7 which might become visible to the protesters and

8 other members of the public, and the chilling effect

9 that such presence may have had on their First

10 Amendment rights. However, to date, she has failed to

11 offer an apology to the satisfaction of the majority

12 of the Members of this Committee. While the Standards

13 and Ethics Committee unanimously voted today not to

14 open a matter against Council Member Vernikov for her

15 conduct during the public assembly, as Chair of this

16 Committee, it is incumbent upon me to speak on behalf

17 and express the majority's deep disappointment with

18 Council Member Vernikov's conduct on October 12,

19 2023. As an elected official, she's entrusted with

20 the responsibility of serving the public and

21 upholding the integrity of the New City Council.

22 Although the Brooklyn District Attorney was unable to

23 hold her criminally liable, possessing what appeared

24 to be a firearm in a public assembly is not only

25 reckless, but a grave violation of the trust placed

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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