

COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES, ELECTIONS,
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 RULES, PRIVILEGES,
ELECTIONS, STANDARDS, AND ETHICS

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Monday, April 6, 2026

Start: 10:04 A.M.

Recess: 11:24 A.M.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - 8th Floor -
Hearing Room 1

B E F O R E: Hon. Sandra Ung, Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Shaun Abreu
Chris Banks
David M. Carr
Elsie Encarnación
Shekar Krishnan
Linda Lee
Kevin C. Riley
Nantasha M. Williams

A P P E A R A N C E S

Nadia Shihata,
Mayoral Nominee for Commissioner of the New York
City Department of Investigation

Maria Cruz Melendez,
Partner at the Law Firm of Skadden & Arps

Kristin Mace,
Partner at the Law Firm of Covington & Burling

COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES, ELECTIONS,
STANDARDS, AND ETHICS

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2 SERGEANT CAMERON: This is a microphone
3 check for the Committee on Rules. Today's date is
4 April 6, 2026; recorded by Preston Cameron in Hearing
5 Room 1.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning. Good
7 morning, and welcome to the New York City Council
8 hearing on the Committee on Rules, Privileges,
9 Elections, Standards, and Ethics. At this time,
10 please silence all electronics and do not approach
11 the dais. Thank you for your cooperation. Chair, you
12 may begin.

13 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Good morning, and
14 welcome to this meeting on the Committee of Rules,
15 Privileges, Election Standards, and Ethics. I'm
16 Council Member Sandra Ung, Chair of the Committee.

17 Before we begin, I would like to
18 recognize other members of the committee who are
19 present: Council Member Encarnación, Deputy Speaker
20 Natasha Williams, and Majority Leader Sean Abreu.

21 I would also like to acknowledge the
counsel to the Committee, Jeffrey Campagna, and the
Committee staff who worked on matters before the
Committee today: Director of Public Integrity
Francesca DellaVecchia, Deputy Director of Public

1 Integrity Alycia Vasell, and Chief Ethics Counsel
2 Pearl Moore.

3 Today, we're holding a public hearing on
4 the Mayor's nominee to be the new Commissioner of the
5 Department of Investigations. By the letter dated
6 March 13, 2026, and pursuant to Section 31 of the New
7 York City Charter, Mayor Zohran Mamdani requested the
8 Council's advice and consent regarding his nomination
9 of Nadia Shihata to be the Commissioner of the
10 Department of Investigations.

11 Section 801 provides that the DOI
12 Commissioner must be a member of the Bar of the State
13 of New York in good standing and have a minimum of
14 five years of law enforcement experience. The Mayor
15 may remove the Commissioner for cause after notice
16 and an opportunity to be heard.

17 The Commission of DOI is responsible for
18 investigating and referring for prosecution cases of
19 fraud, corruption, and other criminal activities by
20 City employees, contractors, and others who do
21 business with the City. In addition, DOI is charged
with studying City agency procedures to identify
systemic failures and recommend improvements;
investigating backgrounds of future City employees

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2 selected for sensitive positions; conducting
3 background checks on companies awarded City
4 contracts; and serving as the investigative unit of
5 the Conflicts of Interest Board ("COIB"). DOI must
6 maintain a Complaint Bureau, which receives
7 complaints from the public.

8 The Commissioner is authorized and
9 empowered to conduct any study or investigation that,
10 in the Commissioner's opinion, may be in the best
11 interests of the city. These include, but are not
12 limited to, investigations concerning the affairs,
13 functions, accounts, methods, personnel, or
14 efficiency of any agency over which DOI has
15 jurisdiction. The Commissioner must also conduct
16 investigations directed by the Mayor or the Council.
17 In addition, COIB may direct DOI to conduct
18 investigations of matters relating to COIB's
19 responsibilities under Charter Chapter 68.

20 DOI has jurisdiction over any agency,
21 officer, or employee of the City; any person or
entity doing business with the City; and any person
or entity paid with or receiving City funds. DOI has
the right to compel the production of documents and
testimony of witnesses.

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2 The Commissioner is also responsible for
3 approving the appointments of all New York City
4 Agency Inspectors General, of whom report directly to
5 the Commissioner. In addition, Section 803 of the
6 Charter requires the DOI Commissioner to report the
7 name and qualifications of the inspector general of
8 the New York Police Department to the Council.

9 Pursuant to Executive Order #87-2, the
10 Commissioner sets guidelines regulating the
11 submission of annual employee financial disclosures.
12 These disclosures must be submitted to DOI. The
13 guidelines establish the deadlines for the submission
14 of these disclosures in order to ensure compliance
15 within a reasonable time.

16 The Commissioner must prepare a written
17 report or statement of findings concerning completed
18 investigations and forward a copy to any requesting
19 party. If the investigation involves allegations of
20 criminal conduct, the Commissioner, upon completing
21 the investigation, must forward a copy of the written
report or statement of findings to the appropriate
prosecuting attorney. If the matter investigated
concerns a conflict of interest or unethical conduct
allegation, the Commissioner must forward a copy of

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2 the written report or statement of findings to the
3 COIB.

4 The Commissioner also has a duty to
5 forward to the Council and to the Mayor a copy of all
6 reports and standards prepared by the Corruption
7 Prevention and Management Review Bureau upon its
8 issuance.

9 We are joined today by Ms. Shihata. Ms.
10 Shihata's law enforcement experience includes 11
11 years spent in the US Attorney's Office for the
12 Eastern District of New York. She started as an
13 Assistant US Attorney in 2011. From 2018 to 2019, she
14 served as a Deputy Chief of Public Integrity Section,
15 in which role she supervised public corruption
16 investigations and prosecutions involving bribery,
17 fraud, theft of government funds, money laundering,
18 and drug trafficking.

19 From 2019 to September 2022, she was the
20 Chief of the Organized Crime and Gang Section, in
21 which she led investigations and prosecutions of
members of various organized crime groups. Most
notably, she led the investigation and prosecution of
rapper R. Kelly, which resulted in his conviction on
charges of racketeering and sex trafficking.

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2 For almost three years, Ms. Shihata
3 worked for the International Criminal Tribunal for
4 the former Yugoslavia, where she served as Appeals
5 Counsel in the Office of the Prosecutor.

6 Most recently, from 2022 to September
7 2025, Ms. Shihata was the founding partner in their
8 firm, Shihata & Geddes, a firm that specializes in
9 sexual misconduct cases, internal investigations, and
10 criminal defense work.

11 Ms. Shihata holds a Juris Doctorate from
12 the University of Michigan and an LLM in
13 International Legal Studies from New York University
14 School of Law.

15 I will recognize the Committee Counsel to
16 administer the affirmation.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please raise your
18 right hand.

19 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
20 whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your
21 testimony before this committee in answer to council
member questions?

MS. SHIHATA: (UN-MIC'D) (INAUDIBLE)

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON UNG: (INAUDIBLE) Good

2

morning, Ms. Shihata. I now recognize you to make
3 your opening statement.

3

4

MS. SHIHATA: Thank you.

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Good morning, Chair Ung and the Members
6 of the Committee. My name is Nadia Shihata. Thank you
7 for the opportunity to appear before you today as the
8 Council considers my nomination to serve as
9 Commissioner of the Department of Investigation.

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DOI serves as the City's independent
10 Inspector General, with a critical dual mission: to
11 root out corruption, waste, abuse, and other
12 misconduct in City government, and also to help
13 prevent such misconduct and waste from occurring in
14 the first place. Its broad jurisdiction covers not
15 only City agencies, employees, and elected officials,
16 but also contractors, nonprofits, and other
17 recipients of City funds. DOI thus plays a critical
18 role in protecting public resources, ensuring the
19 effective delivery of City services, and
20 strengthening New Yorkers' trust in their government.

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I am honored to have been nominated to
19 lead this important Department and, if confirmed, I
20 will take on this role with a deep respect for DOI's

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2 mandate and a clear commitment to independence,
3 fairness, and transparency.

4 I also intend to work constructively with
5 the City Council. Like DOI, the Council serves an
6 important oversight function, and there are
7 meaningful opportunities for the work of DOI and the
8 Council to inform and complement one another, whether
9 through the Council uncovering areas that warrant
10 further investigation by DOI, or DOI's findings
11 shining a light on areas where further Council
12 oversight may be useful or new legislation may be
13 warranted. If confirmed, I will ensure an open
14 dialogue between myself and the Council.

15 Before discussing further how I would
16 approach the role of DOI Commissioner, I'd like to
17 tell you a bit about myself and my qualifications for
18 this position.

19 I'm an immigrant to this country and a
20 naturalized citizen. Born abroad to Egyptian parents,
21 I moved here at the age of five and grew up in
Washington, D.C. I proudly became a U.S. citizen
while in college, a decision that has allowed me to
pursue a fulfilling career engaged mostly in public
service.

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2 I attended the University of Michigan Law
3 School, where I served as Editor-in-Chief of the
4 Michigan Law Review. After law school, I clerked for
5 a federal judge and worked as a litigation associate
6 at large law firms in Washington, D.C. and New York.

7 I later pursued an LLM in International
8 Legal Studies at NYU and moved to the Hague, where I
9 worked as a war crimes prosecutor at the
10 International Criminal Tribunal for the former
11 Yugoslavia.

12 In 2011, I returned to New York to join
13 the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District
14 of New York in Brooklyn, where I had the privilege of
15 serving as an Assistant U.S. Attorney for over 11
16 years. I served in the General Crimes, Organized
17 Crime and Gangs, and Public Integrity Sections, and
18 held senior leadership roles in the Office, including
19 as Chief of the Organized Crime and Gangs Section and
20 Deputy Chief of the Public Integrity Section.

21 In these roles, I regularly made
22 decisions about how to deploy limited resources for
23 maximum impact and worked closely with federal,
24 state, and local law enforcement partners to conduct
25 thorough, evidence-driven investigations.

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2 Over the course of my career as a
3 prosecutor, I conducted and supervised complex
4 investigations involving civil rights violations,
5 public corruption, fraud, racketeering, and violent
6 crime, including murder. Many of these cases involved
7 holding powerful individuals accountable, often for
8 committing crimes against the most vulnerable among
9 us. For example, I led the investigation of federal
10 correctional officers, including two Lieutenants, for
11 sexual abuse of female inmates at the Metropolitan
12 Detention Center in Brooklyn. I prosecuted singer R.
13 Kelly in a groundbreaking case where we used the
14 racketeering statute to hold him accountable for
15 decades of abuse of girls and young women throughout
16 the country. I also prosecuted an active-duty NYPD
17 officer for his involvement in a violent extortion
18 scheme targeting small business owners in an
19 immigrant community in Astoria.

20 My work as a federal prosecutor required
21 independence, discretion, and the ability to follow
the facts wherever they led, without fear or favor,
whether that resulted in criminal charges or closing
an investigation when the evidence did not support
seeking an indictment. Throughout, my north star was

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2 and will continue to be making independent decisions
3 based on the facts and the law.

4 In 2022, I left government to co-found a
5 small law firm focused on civil rights and sexual
6 misconduct matters, internal investigations, and
7 criminal defense. That work deepened my understanding
8 of the importance of fair and due process, the need
9 for strong reporting mechanisms, and for
10 institutional accountability when those mechanisms
11 fail or don't exist. I've since left the firm, but
12 its work continues through my amazing and talented
13 former partners.

14 I look forward to returning to public
15 service and believe my experience, skills, and
16 unwavering commitment to the rule of law will serve
17 me well as DOI Commissioner.

18 If confirmed, I will focus on three
19 fundamentals:

20 First, preserving DOI's investigative
21 independence. DOI's effectiveness depends on its
ability to pursue investigations based on the
evidence and the law, without fear or favor, no
matter where that leads. That is how I approached

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2 investigations as a federal prosecutor, and that is
3 how I will lead DOI.

4 Second, ensuring that DOI has the
5 resources and capacity to fulfill its critical
6 mandate effectively. That means being a relentless
7 advocate for DOI's funding, but also ensuring its
8 limited resources are used wisely, focusing on areas
9 where the risk of corruption is highest, public
10 safety is endangered, and our most vulnerable
11 communities are affected. It also means continuing to
12 invest in DOI's workforce—recruiting, retaining, and
13 developing talented investigators, attorneys,
14 analysts, and other professionals; and fostering a
15 welcoming, diverse workplace where people want to
16 build their careers.

17 Third, ensuring that DOI's impressive
18 track record and work continue to lead to meaningful
19 results. That includes pursuing individual
20 accountability through investigations and referrals
21 for prosecution, but it also means strengthening
DOI's proactive work in identifying systemic risks,
issuing practical and actionable recommendations for
reform, and following up to ensure accepted
recommendations are in fact implemented. In this

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2 regard, I intend to assess and enhance DOI's use of
3 data analytics to detect patterns of risk, look at
4 opportunities to augment training efforts, and
5 explore whether there is room to leverage DOI's
6 monitorship experience to include consideration of
7 additional DOI-supervised monitorships for
8 large-scale City projects to prevent fraud and waste
9 in real-time, as DOI has done with its Asylum Seeker
10 Monitorship.

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12 In closing, if confirmed, I look forward
13 to serving with and learning from the dedicated
14 public servants at DOI who advance its essential
15 mission every day. I also look forward to working
16 with this Council, City Hall, and agencies across
17 City government to help ensure that New York City can
18 effectively meet the needs of its residents while
19 operating with integrity, accountability, and
20 fairness for all.

21
22 Thank you again for the opportunity to
23 appear before you today. I'm happy to answer any
24 questions you may have.

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26 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. And we've
27 also been joined by Minority Leader David Carr and
28 Council Member Chris Banks.

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2 So to start, please describe why it's
3 important for the Commissioner of the Department of
4 Investigation to be independent of political
5 officials that she has been charged with
6 investigating.

7 MS. SHIHATA: Well, as I mentioned, DOI
8 has an important mission to root out corruption and
9 to help prevent it, and independence is key to that.
10 Independence ensures the public that all
11 investigations are driven by the facts, law, and
12 evidence, and nothing else, and that they can have
13 confidence in the findings that DOI makes.
14 Independence also preserves the integrity of the
15 investigations, ensuring that the officials
16 potentially being investigated are not controlling an
17 investigation, and that's of supreme importance to
18 the work DOI does.

19 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. So what
20 relationships should there be between the Mayor and
21 the Commissioner of DOI, and what information should
be disclosed to the Mayor about the ongoing
operations of DOI?

MS. SHIHATA: So I think investigatively,
DOI should be acting independently, but that doesn't

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2 mean it must operate in complete isolation from City
3 Hall or the City Council.

4 I think particularly in the areas of
5 prevention and proactive work, there is room for
6 engagement with other branches of government,
7 including the Council and City Hall, and particularly
8 in ensuring that policy recommendations that have
9 been accepted are in fact implemented, and that we're
10 understanding why they have not been implemented if
11 that's the case. And also looking at whether there
12 are proactive monitoring or other ways that DOI can
13 be engaged in prevention efforts.

14 And then also in the area of ensuring
15 that DOI has the resources it needs to conduct its
16 important mission, I think it's appropriate for the
17 Commissioner to speak to the Mayor's Office and
18 advocate for DOI's budget, particularly with OMB, to
19 ensure it has the resources it needs.

20 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. You have a
21 very long career investigating public corruption.
Based on your experience, does such an investigation
involve examining patterns of campaign donations?

MS. SHIHATA: Sorry, what was the last
part of your question?

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2 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Based on that
3 experience, does such an investigation involve
4 examining patterns of campaign donations?

5 MS. SHIHATA: Do I have experience
6 involving patterns of campaign donations?

7 CHAIRPERSON UNG: In your... Yes, in your
8 career.

9 MS. SHIHATA: Sure, I have not myself
10 investigated patterns of campaign donations. I think
11 while I was Deputy Chief of the Public Integrity
12 Section, I believe there were investigations, for
13 example, the use of straw donors to campaigns, so
14 that's certainly something I'm familiar with.

15 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Okay, so, even not in
16 your career, can you explain why political donations
17 might be relevant in a public corruption
18 investigation? You were just saying the short...

19 MS. SHIHATA: Sure...

20 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Yeah.

21 MS. SHIHATA: Yeah, there are rules about
who can donate to campaigns and the amounts that can
be donated. And so, it may be appropriate in certain
investigations to look at that to ensure that, for
example, foreign nationals aren't contributing to

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2 campaigns illegally or there's not illegal bundling
3 going on with respect to campaigns.

4 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Have you ever donated to
5 any candidates for federal office or to federal
6 political action committees?

7 MS. SHIHATA: Yes, I have.

8 CHAIRPERSON UNG: And how many times have
9 you made such donations?

10 MS. SHIHATA: I don't know the exact
11 number, but I have donated throughout my life--like
12 many people, I have engaged in the political process
13 and have donated to federal campaigns.

14 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Have you ever donated to
15 any candidates from the New York State Office or
16 political action committees that support New York
17 State candidates?

18 MS. SHIHATA: To the best of my
19 recollection, no, I have not.

20 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Have you donated to any
21 municipal political candidates other than the
Mayor--the current mayor?

MS. SHIHATA: No.

CHAIRPERSON UNG: Have you donated to the
political campaigns of anyone now employed by the

1
2 City and over whom you would have jurisdiction as a
3 Commissioner of the Department of Investigations?

4 MS. SHIHATA: Other than my donations to
5 the Mayor, no.

6 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. I now
7 recognize other members of the Committee to ask
8 questions, first, Deputy Speaker Williams.

9 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Hi, good
10 morning.

11 MS. SHIHATA: Good morning.

12 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: The past mayor,
13 Mayor Eric Adams' DOI Commissioner, didn't make any
14 contributions to him, and the former commissioner,
15 the predecessor before that, didn't make any
16 contributions to Mayor de Blasio. In your answers to
17 our pre-hearing questions, you informed us that you
18 donated to Mayor Mamdani's mayoral campaign four
19 times for a total of \$700.00. Under New York City's
20 campaign finance laws, that amount is supplemented by
21 an additional \$2,000 in matching funds for a total
impact of \$2,700. In addition to donating money, what
else did you do for his campaign?

MS. SHIHATA: So, as you mentioned, I
donated \$700.00 over the course of seven months, like

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2 many New Yorkers participating in the political
3 process. And in addition, on one evening, I canvassed
4 for his campaign for about an hour and a half.

5 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Okay, was that
6 the only time that you campaigned for him?

7 MS. SHIHATA: It was just one time.

8 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Did you do any
9 other type of canvassing, door knocking, or street
10 corners?

11 MS. SHIHATA: No, just one... (CROSS-TALK)

12 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Just one night
13 of...

14 MS. SHIHATA: that one time.

15 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Okay. Have you
16 ever done any canvassing for any other City
17 officials?

18 MS. SHIHATA: No, I have not.

19 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Did you attend
20 any campaign events in support of his campaign?

21 MS. SHIHATA: No, I did not.

DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Would you agree,
even though it was one night, I'll admit, that for
busy professionals like yourself, it takes

1
2 significantly more enthusiasm to get people to
3 volunteer for a campaign than merely to donate money?

4 MS. SHIHATA: I would just note that this
5 was after I had left my law firm, so I was not
6 employed at the time... (CROSS-TALK)

7 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Busy?

8 Okay, as an elected official myself,
9 it's so easy to get someone to donate a couple of
10 dollars, but when it comes to actually having people
11 physically like knock doors, I find that the people
12 who have canvased really, really are committed to
13 what I'm doing versus the people that don't need
14 money. So that's just the nature of the questions.

15 So we've established that you donated
16 repeatedly to the current mayor's campaign, and you
17 gave a little bit of your time and energy to
18 volunteer for him. And we've also established that
19 you have never donated to any other candidate from a
20 municipal office. Based on this pattern, might you
21 say that you have demonstrated a uniquely
enthusiastic level of support for this particular
mayor?

MS. SHIHATA: I would not agree with that
characterization. I've donated throughout my life to

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2 various political campaigns. But most importantly, as
3 a former federal prosecutor, I understand very well
4 the difference between my support for a campaign as a
5 private citizen and my role as a public servant
6 tasked with making independent, investigative
7 decisions based on the facts and the law without fear
8 or favor. Throughout my over 20-year legal career,
9 I've acted professionally and with independence and
10 integrity, and I would continue to do that as DOI
11 Commissioner.

12 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Thank you.

13 And yes, we did see that you donated to
14 federal campaigns, but you never donated to city
15 campaigns. And so what specifically excited you about
16 the mayor's campaigns compared to other municipal
17 races, that, for the first time, you've decided to
18 donate and volunteer, even though, just for one
19 night, I'm trying to put it into perspective, for a
20 campaign for city office?

21 MS. SHIHATA: This was a particularly
important election, which seemed like its outcome was
not foretold. And I, like many New Yorkers, believe
affordability is an issue in this city, and that's

1
2 what drove me to give to the Mayor's campaign and
3 support his campaign.

4 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Thank you.

5 What would you say to someone who says
6 these donations--or sees these donations, excuse me,
7 you're volunteering and your enthusiasm for his
8 campaign—they say that this is evidence that you
9 have a pre-existing bias in favor of this mayor, and
10 obviously, in the Council, especially in these
11 positions, we're always looking for independent
12 individuals that don't necessarily have predetermined
13 relationships with the Mayor—so would you say that
14 this is evidence that you have a pre-existing bias
15 for the Mayor?

16 MS. SHIHATA: Absolutely not.

17 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Okay.

18 MS. SHIHATA: I think anyone who knows me,
19 or who has worked with me, knows my level of
20 professionalism and integrity over my 20-year career,
21 and that I will approach every investigation,
including any that may involve the Mayor or any
senior officials in his administration—I will
approach that as I would approach any investigation,

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2 looking at the facts and the law and following those
3 with independence and objectivity.

4 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Thank you.

5 So if you were confirmed as Commissioner,
6 do you think it would be appropriate to, let's say,
7 donate to the Mayor's reelection campaign?

8 MS. SHIHATA: I don't plan to make any
9 donations as Commissioner.

10 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Okay. You
11 mentioned independence a lot, and, you know, a
12 similar question again, as Commissioner, I'm just
13 wondering your opinion, if you feel like municipal
14 campaigns give the appearance that you favor some
15 electeds more than others? And do you think that this
16 could potentially interfere with the appearance of
17 independence?

18 MS. SHIHATA: I think if I'm confirmed, my
19 record will be judged by what I do. And I intend to
20 lead the department in the way I have always
21 conducted myself as a federal prosecutor, and
22 throughout my legal career, with independence and
23 integrity.

24 It is incredibly important that
25 investigators, law enforcement, and prosecutors

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2 follow the facts wherever they lead. And that is
3 how-- what I've always done, and that is what I will
4 continue to do if I'm confirmed as Commissioner.

5 DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. I will now
7 turn it over to Majority Leader Abreu.

8 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: Thank you, Chair.
9 Thank you for testifying before us, Ms. Shihata.

10 How and when did you come to meet the
11 Mayor's Chief Counsel, Ramzi Kassem?

12 MS. SHIHATA: I first met him shortly
13 after I graduated from law school. I was studying for
14 the bar exam in Washington, D.C. I was introduced to
15 him by a mutual friend. He, I believe, was a summer
16 associate at a large law firm in D.C. and didn't know
17 many people in that city. And so that's how I first
18 met him.

19 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: Have you ever had
20 dinner with him or met him for drinks after work?

21 MS. SHIHATA: I believe that summer, we
met for drinks and dinner, yes.

MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: In response to our
pre-hearing questions, you described your
relationship with Mr. Kassem as a social relationship

1
2 that started shortly after you graduated from law
3 school. How many years ago was that?

4 MS. SHIHATA: I graduated from law school
5 in 2003.

6 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: What involvement
7 has Mr. Kassem had in your career, and what role did
8 he play when you founded your law firm in 2022?

9 MS. SHIHATA: He has not played a role in
10 my career. We have kept in touch over the years,
11 seeing each other every few years periodically.

12 When I started my law firm with my
13 partner, one of the areas we intended to focus on was
14 civil rights work, and I reached out to him. We met
15 for lunch—I reached out to him to catch up and to
16 get his advice because he had done a lot of civil
17 rights work and was a leader in that area.

18 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: DOI has conducted
19 major investigations of the last two mayors and their
20 staffs. If DOI investigates Mayor Mamdani or his
21 staff, do you acknowledge that the chief counsel to
the Mayor will likely be involved in their defense?

MS. SHIHATA: Do I acknowledge that he
would likely be involved? I acknowledge that's a
possibility.

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2 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: Why a possibility
and not just a fact-- not just a matter of fact?

3 MS. SHIHATA: I just-- I don't know
4 exactly how their office operates.

5 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: Do you acknowledge
6 that, given the close working relationship of the
7 Mayor and his chief counsel, there may be instances
when the chief counsel's role is also investigated?

8 MS. SHIHATA: Yes, that is a possibility,
9 yes.

10 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: Given your
11 long-standing social relationship with the Mayor's
12 chief counsel, Mr. Kassem, would you recuse yourself
13 from any of those investigations? When you answer,
please explain your reasoning.

14 MS. SHIHATA: Sure. I would consult with
15 counsel and the general counsel of DOI regarding any
16 such instances, and I would follow whatever recusal
advice I was given.

17 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: So it's no-- not
18 necessarily-- you won't necessarily recuse yourself
19 from those investigations. Is that right?

20 MS. SHIHATA: Sitting here today, I can't
anticipate every possible scenario that might come

1
2 up, but what I can commit to is consulting with
3 counsel and following any recusal advice I'm given...

4 (CROSS-TALK)

5 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: If at any moment
6 the DOI, my apologies if-- if at any moment the Chief
7 Counsel were ever to be investigated, would you
8 recuse yourself from that?

9 MS. SHIHATA: As I said, I would consult
10 with counsel. I think in those circumstances that's
11 likely. But what I would do is consult with general
12 counsel and follow that advice.

13 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: The Mayor's
14 transition team consisted of 400 people who were
15 brought together to recruit talent to the
16 administration. Did you have any direct involvement
17 with the members of the transition team during the
18 selection process, or do you only deal with staff?

19 MS. SHIHATA: During the selection
20 process, did I-- Sorry, can you repeat the question?

21 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: Yeah, of course.
Did you have any direct involvement with the members
of the transition team during the selection process,
or did you only deal with staff?

1
2 MS. SHIHATA: I dealt with staff. I think
3 at one point, after I had submitted my application
4 for the position, I received a call from someone on
5 the transition team just to acknowledge receipt of
6 the application materials, and they asked me one or
two questions... (CROSS-TALK)

7 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: But your first
8 contact was with staff, is that correct?

9 MS. SHIHATA: Correct.

10 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: Did your
11 relationship with the Council to the Mayor allow you
12 to bypass the members of the transition team during
13 the selection process? My understanding is, yes.

14 MS. SHIHATA: I don't know what the
15 procedures are with the transition team, so I'm not
16 in a position to answer that.

17 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: Okay.

18 You said in your pre-hearing questions
19 that the Mayor's counsel asked you to apply for the
20 job, that it wasn't your idea. If you were looking to
21 hire people for their independence, would you hire
someone with whom you've been friends for almost half
your life? Or will you try to conduct outreach beyond
your immediate circle?

1
2 MS. SHIHATA: So I think that
3 mischaracterizes what transpired.

4 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: Okay.

5 MS. SHIHATA: The Chief Counsel contacted
6 me to see if I might be interested in the position
7 based on-- I believe he contacted me based on my
8 skill and experience for the job. He didn't encourage
9 me to apply. He didn't ask me to apply. He asked me
10 if I was interested. I considered whether I was, and
11 then I submitted an application.

12 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: Were you
13 interested before he-- before that request came in?

14 MS. SHIHATA: Before he contacted me, I
15 did see in the news that the previous DOI
16 Commissioner had left her position, and I had thought
17 about it briefly.

18 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: And why didn't you
19 apply before that?

20 MS. SHIHATA: That was a few days before
21 he reached out to me.

MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: Has Mr. Kassem or
anyone else working for the Mayor suggested that
there are individuals that they would recommend for

1
2 employment at DOI? If not, do you think it would be
3 appropriate for them to make such recommendations?

4 MS. SHIHATA: They have not. And I intend
5 to make independent decisions about who is employed
6 at DOI.

7 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: Why did you decide
8 to leave the US Attorney's Office?

9 MS. SHIHATA: I had been at the US
10 Attorney's office for about 11 and a half years. I
11 had conducted and supervised countless
12 investigations, prosecutions, and appeals. I felt
13 like I had reached my potential at that job, and it
14 was also time to let other people have leadership
15 opportunities there. Another colleague of mine had
16 decided to leave before me. We had started to talk
17 about potentially opening up a small law firm. That
18 prospect was interesting to me at the time, and I
19 decided I wanted to pursue that.

20 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: You reported that
21 you left your law firm in September of 2025. Your
former partner reported that in August of 2025, the
firm (INAUDIBLE) one or more clients involved in the
BHRAGS [Home Care Corp] matter, the BHRAGS matter
that is currently before the DOI. Who are these

1 clients, and in what capacity are these clients
2 involved in the matter? Are they targets?

3 MS. SHIHATA: So I was not aware of that
4 involvement, but my understanding, which I learned
5 just a few days ago after the indictment became
6 public, is that the firm or a partner in the firm
7 was... is pool counsel to employees, uh, employed by
8 one of the nonprofits.

9 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: Do you intend to
10 discuss these matters with COIB or DOI during your
11 vetting process?

12 MS. SHIHATA: Sorry, can you repeat the
13 question?

14 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: Have you discussed
15 these matters with COIB or DOI during your vetting
16 process?

17 MS. SHIHATA: I have not. I was not aware
18 of the representation until two days ago.

19 MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: And if confirmed,
20 what would you do in relation to these matters?

21 MS. SHIHATA: Again, I would seek the
advice of counsel and follow any recusal advice.

MAJORITY LEADER ABREU: Thank you, Chair.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. I would like
to turn it over to Minority Leader Carr.

3 MINORITY LEADER CARR: Thank you, Chair.

4 Ms. Shihata, thank you for being with us
5 today and answering all of our questions and for your
6 testimony.

7 I want to talk a little bit about your
8 time in public service and then in the private
9 sector. So obviously, you have significant public
10 service experience coming into this appointment
11 process, and you talked a little bit about this in
12 your pre-hearing question responses. Why return to
13 public service now when it seems like, you know, you
could really go anywhere that you like based on your
resume? And, you know, why in particular, DOI?

14 MS. SHIHATA: So, I've always felt most
15 fulfilled in my career when engaged in public
16 service. I think public service is where you can
17 really have the most impact. And I think the work
18 that DOI does is so important to the city in rooting
19 out corruption, waste, and mismanagement, and also
20 helping to prevent those things, that it's really a
unique opportunity to make a difference in a city
that I love. And so that's why.

1
2 MINORITY LEADER CARR: Okay. Thank you.
3 You mentioned in your response to the Deputy
4 Speaker's questions that you only donated to one
5 non-federal candidate, and that's the Mayor, correct?

6 MS. SHIHATA: That's right.

7 MINORITY LEADER CARR: And your
8 contributions to federal candidates over the years,
9 were they to candidates of a single party or were
10 they to multiple parties?

11 MS. SHIHATA: I believe they were
12 candidates of a single party.

13 MINORITY LEADER CARR: And would you
14 identify which party that was?

15 MS. SHIHATA: The Democratic Party—I will
16 say, I have voted in the past for other parties.

17 MINORITY LEADER CARR: Okay, that's good
18 to know.

19 So, I-- you used this phrase earlier in
20 your testimony and then an answer to questions, you
21 know, "without fear or favor", right? And that's
often used particularly for folks who are in or
seeking law enforcement careers. And so you'll be
returning to a law enforcement role if you were
confirmed. Would you commit to acting without fear or

1
2 favor, regardless of political persuasion or identity
3 of the people you were investigating?

4 MS. SHIHATA: Absolutely.

5 MINORITY LEADER CARR: And can you talk a
6 little bit about how important you feel that is in
7 terms of your role, despite, you know, coming to the
8 table with views?

9 MS. SHIHATA: I think it's the most
10 important thing. Investigations have to be driven by
11 the evidence, the law, and nothing else. They must be
12 apolitical, nonpartisan. That's how you ensure you're
13 reaching outcomes that are warranted, and it's also
14 how you build trust in your decision making by the
15 public.

16 MINORITY LEADER CARR: So you indicated
17 earlier, right, you contributed to the Mayor, you
18 volunteered a little bit of time for the Mayor. You
19 know, clearly you have a level of investment in his
20 success as the mayor that perhaps some others do not,
21 uh, and support for him and his views in at least one
particular policy area—you talked about affordability
in your answers. So how do you compartmentalize that
political kinship, if you will, with the role that

1
2 may have you investigating that very leader and his
3 administration, depending upon the circumstances?

4 MS. SHIHATA: It's what I have done
5 throughout my career, particularly as a federal
6 prosecutor. I have investigated people I have
7 supported in the past. That has not affected my
8 ability to investigate them and reach conclusions
9 driven by the evidence and the law. And that is how I
10 will continue to conduct myself as DOI Commissioner.

11 MINORITY LEADER CARR: Appreciate that.

12 My understanding is that you have at
13 least one, if not multiple, social media accounts
14 that you're the owner or user of. Is that correct?

15 MS. SHIHATA: Yes.

16 MINORITY LEADER CARR: What platforms?

17 MS. SHIHATA: I believe I have a Facebook
18 account, an X account, Instagram, Threads, and
19 Substack, I believe... (CROSS-TALK)

20 MINORITY LEADER CARR: Okay. So, pretty
21 comprehensive list there. Are they available to view
by the public?

MS. SHIHATA: Oh, I'm sorry, LinkedIn as
well, sorry... (CROSS-TALK)

MINORITY LEADER CARR: LinkedIn? Okay.

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MS. SHIHATA: My LinkedIn is public, yes.

2

MINORITY LEADER CARR: But the others are

3

not?

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MS. SHIHATA: I don't believe so.

5

MINORITY LEADER CARR: Have they ever been

6

available to the public, to your knowledge?

7

MS. SHIHATA: I think at one point my X

account was.

8

MINORITY LEADER CARR: And when did you

9

make that change to the best of your recollection?

10

MS. SHIHATA: When I had an active law

firm.

11

MINORITY LEADER CARR: Okay. And would you

12

be willing to make those accounts accessible to the

13

public so they could be reviewed by the public as you

14

go through this vetting process, and of course, the

15

Council, institutionally?

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MS. SHIHATA: Well, I would say I would be

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willing to consider it. My social media accounts have

18

a lot of personal family photos and things like that

that I would not necessarily want to share with the

19

broader public.

20

MINORITY LEADER CARR: And what about

members of the Council who are assisting the

21

1
2 Committee with this investigation-- investigatory and
3 vetting process for your nomination?

4 MS. SHIHATA: I am happy to consider it.

5 MINORITY LEADER CARR: Okay.

6 And in terms of, you know, the resources
7 that you'd be looking for, for the Department
8 Investigation, you indicated in your testimony that
9 you would be broadly advocating for the agency, you
10 know, whatever the agency needed in terms of
11 staffing. Do you have a sense of what that is?

12 MS. SHIHATA: So I watched the Preliminary
13 Budget Hearing involving the Oversight Commission--
14 sorry, Committee, and the acting commissioner's
15 testimony there. So from that testimony, I'm aware of
16 some of the specifics of the budgetary issues.

17 MINORITY LEADER CARR: So you'd be digging
18 into that more, I guess, if in the event that you
19 were confirmed at that point?

20 MS. SHIHATA: Yes, absolutely.

21 MINORITY LEADER CARR: And do you have a
sense of what you'd be doing as we approach the
Executive Budget proposal later in the spring, once
you had gotten your feet wet, if you were confirmed?

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2 MS. SHIHATA: Yes, I imagine I would be
advocating for additional resources for DOI.

3 MINORITY LEADER CARR: Okay. That's all
4 the questions I have. Thank you, Chair.

5 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. We have also
6 been joined by Council Member Riley.

7 Now, I would like to turn it over to
Council Member Lee.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Thank you, and
9 apologies for coming late. I was stuck in a meeting,
10 but thanks for being here today.

11 MS. SHIHATA: Thank you.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And I know that these
13 questions that I'm about to ask are similar to some
of the sentiments of the other previous questions.

14 So my first question is, how can you
15 assure members of the Council that the public at
large--and the public at large-- that you will
16 investigate the Mayor and his staff without bias,
17 given that you and the counsel to the Mayor have
18 maintained a social relationship for almost half your
19 life. And that, Mr. Kassem, is also the person who
recruited you to apply for the job?

20

21

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2 MS. SHIHATA: Well, first, just to
3 clarify, I have been friends with Mr. Kassem for a
4 long time, but I would just like to make clear that
5 it was not a close friendship. It has not been a
6 close friendship. We have seen each other
7 periodically, once every few years, maybe exchanged a
8 few emails once every few years. So I would not
9 characterize it as a particularly close relationship.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. I overheard you
11 saying that as I was walking in, so I just wanted to
12 double-check. Okay.

13 MS. SHIHATA: Sure. But more
14 fundamentally, I intend, if confirmed, to approach
15 being DOI Commissioner as I have through-- as I
16 approached being a federal prosecutor, which is to
17 investigate matters without fear or favor, following
18 the evidence and the law and nothing else.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: I actually underlined
20 that in your testimony, because I like "fear or
21 favor", that's a good notion.

One other thing-- well, because in the
previous-- I guess the reason why we're asking this
also is that it was actually the former DOI staff

1
2 that broke the investigation around the previous
3 administration and the previous mayor.

4 So I just want to make sure, obviously,
5 that, you know, when it comes to your role,
6 especially in this particular role, that you will be
7 able to do it without any sort of bias or, you know,
8 skewed perspective. So I just wanted to make sure
9 about that.

10 MS. SHIHATA: And, just to add, I think
11 the work that the prior Commissioner did, and the DOI
12 did, under the prior commissioner was very important,
13 and I intend to try to follow in her big footsteps
14 should I be confirmed.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

16 If you were investigating public
17 contracts that were supposed to be subject to an RFP,
18 and you found that a contract had been awarded to the
19 friend of the official in charge of the contract,
20 would you stop your inquiry if you found out that the
21 contractor was qualified to provide the services?

MS. SHIHATA: No, I think that would still
be a matter that should be investigated.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

1
2 In 2025, it was reported that since 2019,
3 DOI has lost a quarter of its employees. As
4 Commissioner, what will you do to increase and
5 maintain the headcount necessary for the agency to do
6 its job?

6 MS. SHIHATA: So I agree this is an
7 important issue, and that the lessening of the DOI's
8 workforce is something that the DOI Commissioner
9 really needs to address. And so I would start by
10 being a relentless advocate for DOI's budget and
11 explaining why it's so important that DOI is properly
12 funded. I think it ultimately leads to saving City
13 resources, given DOI's mandate in rooting out
14 corruption and waste.

13 So I think I would start with advocating
14 with the Office of Management and Budget and the
15 Mayor's Office, but also expanding that as necessary
16 to the City Council and the public at large, so that
17 New Yorkers understand what's at stake when DOI is
18 not properly funded.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Mm-hmm.

19 MS. SHIHATA: I think I would also invest
20 time and resources in ensuring that the headcount
21 that DOI has remains there, including by ensuring

1
2 that we don't have too much attrition and that DOI is
3 a place where people want to build their careers and
4 stay.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: What's the current
6 headcount, and how has that changed compared to
7 previous fiscal years?

8 MS. SHIHATA: So my understanding is that
9 the current headcount is around a little over 400.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

11 MS. SHIHATA: And I think that includes
12 some individuals who are actually paid by other city
13 agencies. My understanding is that about five years
14 ago, the DOI had a significantly higher headcount,
15 which was, I think, over 108 more positions.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, over 108 more.

17 I know the current chair of our City
18 Council's Oversight and Investigation, as well as the
19 previous chair, have both advocated for a lot more
20 funding in order to have the staffing necessary to do
21 their jobs effectively. And your predecessor actually
testified in a budget hearing that the budgetary
needs of the agency did not seem to be a priority for
the previous mayor. And so, just wondering if you've

1
2 had any conversations with the current mayor about
3 his commitment to funding the agency?

4 MS. SHIHATA: I have not, as there is an
5 acting commissioner who is leading those efforts now,
6 but I can assure the Council that that will be a top
7 priority of mine to have those conversations.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, or even in your
9 conversations with the acting commissioner, do you
10 know if that's something that, generally speaking,
11 the agency is trying to really advocate for?

12 MS. SHIHATA: My understanding is, yes.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. Also, what
14 amount would you say would be an increase that is
15 necessary to be able to do the work effectively in
16 your agency? Whether it's additional, how many more
17 additional staff lines, and how does that translate
18 to the budget, if you could give us a sense?

19 MS. SHIHATA: So I want to temper this by
20 the fact that I'm not in fact in the position yet.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right.

MS. SHIHATA: But my understanding from
watching the public testimony is that there are, I
believe, 26 vacancies currently, and so I think we'd
want the ability to actually fulfill those lines. And

1
2 in addition, I believe there are some new needs that
3 have been brought up by the current leadership of
4 DOI, including for the investigation into the World
Trade Center toxins...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Mm-hmm

6 MS. SHIHATA: that the Council has
7 mandated the DOI conduct.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And what
9 experience do you have advocating for your own
10 operating budget and how will it-- how will that
11 experience inform how you will advocate for DOI's
12 budget?

13 MS. SHIHATA: So as I mentioned in my
14 written responses, I did not have a role in securing
15 funding at the US Attorney's Office other than
16 ensuring that forfeiture funds were sought in cases
17 and that certain investigations were designated as
18 OCDETF (Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task
19 Forces) investigations. So I have not had that
20 experience previously. But I have been doing my best
21 to get up to speed on how the City budgeting process
works, and I intend to rely on the incredible staff
at DOI who work on this process as well to inform my
decision making in that regard.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, great, you will
3 have a loud voice when it comes to advocating for
4 that.

5 MS. SHIHATA: I intend to.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yes. Okay. Are you
7 aware that the Mayor's Preliminary Budget provides
8 DOI with the same budget as it had last year? Even in
9 the face of a budget deficit, do you think that's
10 appropriate given the functions of DOI?

11 MS. SHIHATA: I am aware of that. I think
12 I will always advocate for more funding for DOI,
13 given its important mandate. And I anticipate that if
14 confirmed, I would do that, advocate for more
15 funding.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, great.

17 And I guess just my last question,
18 because obviously you have a lot of experience
19 throughout your different roles as a prosecutor
20 running a, you know, a law firm yourself. And have
21 there ever been moments where there was a difficult
situation you were in, or a case you were dealing
with where, personally, you felt very strongly one
way, but obviously, you needed to advocate on behalf
of your client? Let's just say when you are a

1
2 prosecutor, you know, the higher-ups want you to
3 prosecute the case a certain way, and was there ever
4 an instance where you felt personally like it was
5 different? And how did you work that situation out,
6 or how did you advocate?

7 MS. SHIHATA: Sure. Yes, I do think there
8 were some instances of that when I was a prosecutor.
9 And the way I handled that was to advocate internally
10 for my position and explain why I thought we should
11 proceed in the manner we should.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, great, thank
13 you. Thank you, Chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. I'd like to
15 turn it over now to Council Member Banks.

16 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: Thank you, Chair,
17 and congratulations again on your nomination.

18 MS. SHIHATA: Thank you.

19 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: How did you hear
20 about the vacancy at the DOI for Commissioner?

21 MS. SHIHATA: I believe I initially saw it
on the news.

DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: Have you had any
conversations with the Mayor and his team about the
expectations of this role?

1
2 MS. SHIHATA: In the interview process,
3 they asked me questions about my vision for the
4 agency and my qualifications. But it was all in the
5 interview process... (CROSS-TALK)

6 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: Anything further
7 discussed that you would...

8 MS. SHIHATA: With respect to?

9 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: With the...

10 MS. SHIHATA: With expectations of what I
11 would do...

12 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: Expectations, yes.

13 MS. SHIHATA: certain things, for example?
14 No, absolutely not.

15 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: You were reportedly
16 contacted by the Mayor directly for this position? Am
17 I...

18 MS. SHIHATA: No, by his Chief Counsel.

19 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: By his Chief
20 Counsel? And, for the record, you have contributed to
21 the Mayor's campaign.

MS. SHIHATA: Yes, like many New Yorkers,
I have... (CROSS-TALK)

DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: Right. Why should
New Yorkers believe that you can independently act

1
2 when it comes to being a DOI Commissioner, with these
3 loose relationships with the administration—or with
4 the Mayor?

5 MS. SHIHATA: Because that is what I have
6 done throughout my career. I've acted with integrity
7 and independence as a federal prosecutor. I've
8 investigated people I've supported in the past. It
9 has no bearing and will have no bearing on how I
10 conduct myself in this position, should I be
11 confirmed.

12 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: Okay. And given your
13 previous relationship with the Mayor, would you
14 commit, on the record, to recusing yourself from any
15 investigation that directly involves the Mayor or any
16 senior mayoral official?

17 MS. SHIHATA: I will commit to seeking the
18 advice of counsel regarding recusal and following the
19 advice I receive.

20 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: Okay. Do you believe
21 that your prior financial support of the Mayor
creates a conflict of interest in this role?

MS. SHIHATA: I... (CROSS-TALK)

DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: And if not, why not?

MS. SHIHATA: Yes, I...

1

DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: Yeah.

2

MS. SHIHATA: I do not actually...

3

DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: Okay.

4

MS. SHIHATA: (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

5

DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: Okay, and why not?

6

MS. SHIHATA: Because I have approached--

it is within my very being to approach every
investigation based on the evidence, facts, and the
law, and nothing else. That is how I have conducted
myself throughout my 20-year legal career. And that
is how I would conduct myself here.

10

Nevertheless, if any such situation
arises, I will seek the advice of counsel. And I will
follow any recusal advice I receive.

11

12

13

DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: All right, thank
you. Thank you for that response.

14

15

DOI is supposed to be independent and
hold the City government accountable. Can you point
to a time in your career where you have challenged
leadership or authority, despite political pressure?
And this could include workplace-related political
pressure.

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MS. SHIHATA: So I think I mentioned that
I led an investigation of sexual abuse of female

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1 inmates at the Metropolitan Detention Center in
2 Brooklyn. As federal prosecutors, we regularly
3 interacted with law enforcement officers who worked
4 at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn as
5 part of our other investigations and cases. They
6 certainly were very interested in the investigation I
7 was conducting. They wanted it to finish quickly and
8 to move forward as quickly as possible, and often
9 sought information about the investigation. And I
10 blocked all of that out and conducted the
11 investigation, taking the time it needed to conduct
12 by following the evidence and the law.

13 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: If DOI uncovers a
14 wrongdoing within the Mayor's Office, are you
15 prepared to pursue that fully, even if it puts you at
16 odds with the administration?

17 MS. SHIHATA: Absolutely... (CROSS-TALK)

18 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: The administration
19 that appointed you?

20 MS. SHIHATA: Absolutely.

21 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: And, we have seen
high-profile corruption issues in government, at
multiple levels, including here in New York City. Why

1
2 should the public trust that the DOI, under your
3 leadership, will not be influenced by politics?

4 MS. SHIHATA: Again, because that is how I
5 have conducted myself throughout my 20-year legal
6 career. The importance of independence and integrity
7 of investigations at DOI is of the utmost importance
8 to me. It is how I will lead DOI if confirmed. It is
9 how DOI has operated, with its amazing staff, doing
10 amazing work under difficult circumstances. And it is
11 how I would continue to lead DOI.

12 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: Thank you.

13 I just want to dive into some NYCHA
14 concerns and questions I have. I chair the Public
15 Housing Committee, and during my time in office,
16 NYCHA has experienced repeated instances of
17 corruption, including procurement irregularities,
18 bribery schemes, and failures of internal oversight.
19 Given your background in public integrity and complex
20 corruption investigations, how would you approach the
21 oversight of an agency as large and as complex as
22 NYCHA?

MS. SHIHATA: Thank you for the question.
My understanding is that DOI currently has a squad
dedicated to investigating issues at NYCHA, and I

1
2 certainly would continue to have a squad dedicated
3 solely to that.

4 I think one of my first orders of
5 business after becoming commissioner, should I be
6 confirmed, would be to assess the needs and
7 capabilities of all the squads, including that one,
8 and try to understand if there are additional
9 resources they need, and if so, how we can get them
10 what they need.

11 So really, I think the first few months
12 I'm at DOI will be about listening, learning, and
13 then making informed decisions about how to improve
14 things as necessary.

15 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: Okay, thank you.

16 NYCHA is subject to federal oversight and
17 ongoing monitorship. How would you ensure that the
18 Department of Investigation asserts its authority and
19 fulfills its mandate without duplicating federal
20 efforts or deferring to heavily federalized partners?

21 MS. SHIHATA: So, I think open lines of
communication are important, knowing what the federal
monitor is looking into, because we don't want to
duplicate efforts, particularly given the limited
resources of the department.

1
2 I also think certain things that the
3 federal monitor looks into, which may be more
4 systemic issues, can potentially inform
5 investigations that the DOI conducts. So if they find
6 that there's, you know, a systemic issue with a
7 certain area, there may be then room for a DOI
8 investigation about individual misconduct in that
9 area. And that's certainly a way that those two
10 entities can inform one another.

11 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: Okay.

12 And you've led investigations involving
13 the entrenched systems of abuse and corruption where
14 misconduct was allowed to persist for years. What
15 specific lessons from those experiences would you
16 bring to DOI's oversight over NYCHA?

17 MS. SHIHATA: I think one thing I've
18 learned is that sometimes well-meaning policies can
19 really result in systemic institutional failures. So
20 I think it's important to look at what the goal was,
21 what the actual policy is, and then how that's been
implemented. And you may start out with a great goal
and still end up with a systemic failure. And so you
have to look at each stage of the process.

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2 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: Thank you. Many
3 NYCHA employees and residents report fear of
4 retaliation for raising concerns. How would you
5 ensure that DOI is viewed as safe, trusted-- a safe
6 and trusted venue for reporting this type of
7 misconduct?

8 MS. SHIHATA: I think a lot of it is
9 making the public aware, frankly, of DOI's existence.
10 I'm not sure that the general public, including NYCHA
11 residents, necessarily know about DOI or what it
12 does. So I think there have to be outreach efforts to
13 ensure that communities that have things to report
14 are reached out to and know what DOI does, know that
15 it's independent, and can feel comfortable, and then
16 also know about the whistleblower protections
17 available.

18 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: And according to a
19 report by Tim McNichols (phonetic), complaints about
20 NYCHA submitted to the New York State Department of
21 Investigation have steadily increased. In recent
years, approximately 1,700 complaints were made in
2022, approximately 2,500 in 2023, and 3,300 in 2024.

Given the significant increase in NYCHA's
related complaints to DOI, how would you ensure that

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2 these reports lead to meaningful systemic change and
3 improved conditions for residents rather than
4 remaining limited to a reactive investigations?

5 MS. SHIHATA: So I think I would focus on
6 two areas in trying to address that, which is
7 obviously a very concerning upward trend in
8 complaints. I think the first is making sure that
9 policy recommendations that have already been made
10 and accepted are, in fact, implemented. So I think
11 follow-up is very, very important, and that's
12 something I would prioritize.

13 I also think that there should be some
14 analysis of the types of complaints received and to
15 see what areas they fall in as a predictor of where
16 DOI should be putting its resources. So, you know, if
17 there are complaints about a certain area, then that
18 is an area that DOI should consider proactively
19 investigating rather than waiting for, you know, a
20 particular individual complaint to come into the DOI
21 complaint system to address it.

DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: All Right.

And my last question—last week, Leader
Jeffries, Council Member Mealy, and I were in
Brownsville to announce \$1 million in funding for

1 security cameras and infrastructure upgrades at three
2 NYCHA developments, including \$250,000 for Carter G
3 Woodson Houses, which is in my district. This is a
4 development with a tragic history. Several years ago,
5 a handyman murdered three senior residents. Last
6 year, I led the effort to restore, along with my
7 colleagues, \$7 million in funding for a NYCHA
8 security guard program at about 55 NYCHA developments
9 after it was proposed for elimination in the City's
budget.

10 However, in 2025, in an investigation
11 report by an online publication, the City found that
12 security and fire guards at NYCHA developments were
13 frequently absent from their posts and, in some
14 cases, falsified timesheets, putting residents at
risk.

15 As the nominee for DOI Commissioner, how
16 would you ensure stronger oversight and
17 accountability of NYCHA security contracts so that
18 resources the City fights to preserve actually result
in a real on-the-ground safety for residents?

19 MS. SHIHATA: So I think the City's
20 reporting on those issues was actually based on a DOI
21 investigation and findings made by DOI. So I think

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2 the good news is that DOI has already been focused on
3 this area.

4 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: Right.

5 MS. SHIHATA: And they issued
6 recommendations. So what I would do as DOI
7 Commissioner is to ensure that the recommendations
8 that have been accepted by NYCHA are, in fact, being
9 implemented, and follow up regularly on that.

10 DEPUTY LEADER BANKS: All right. Thank
11 you, Madam Chair. Thank you.

12 MS. SHIHATA: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. We have also
14 been joined by Council Member Krishnan, and I will
15 turn it over to him for questions.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you,
17 Chair. Good to see you, Ms. Shihata, and thank you
18 for your testimony today, too.

19 I wanted to ask some questions in a few
20 different areas and just clarify a few things.

21 So, just taking a step back, you've
22 testified on a number of different topics at this
23 point, too, but what would you say would be your top
24 priorities as Commissioner to improve the functioning
25 of the agency itself?

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2 MS. SHIHATA: I think the top priority is
3 ensuring that DOI has the resources and budget it
4 needs to conduct its mission.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: And I would
6 agree with that, too. And I think that has been a
7 major issue.

8 One question, I know Council Member Lee
9 asked a bit about the budget deficit now and the need
10 to increase resources for DOI, which has been a big
11 issue. Can you talk a bit more first, just about
12 where you see there being a need for resources within
13 DOI? What particular staffing would you need, and
14 how would that help with the investigations you have
15 to?

16 MS. SHIHATA: Sure. I think one area
17 where, based on my conversations with people at DOI,
18 there has been significant turnover has been with
19 investigators. So I think that's a particular area
20 where I would focus on getting resources so that we
21 could hire sufficient investigators and then retain
them, ensuring there is a path for career development
for those people.

I think often why people leave jobs like
that is because they have opportunities for greater

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2 compensation, not only in the private sector but
3 sometimes even within city government, and maybe
4 don't see a path for career development.

5 I know the prior commissioner worked on
6 these issues and focused on them intensely, and I
7 would intend to continue that.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: And part of that
9 issue, I think, is sort of looking at, again, the way
10 in which DOI, as you might be aware of too, is
11 reliant particularly on asset forfeiture from one
12 case in particular, but could be other ones as well.
13 Which, as we saw in our budget hearings earlier this
14 year, too, ended up funding a number of core, while
15 new, core new operations within the agency. And
16 frankly, an agency like this should not be so
17 dependent on asset forfeiture to continue funding new
18 but still critical operations of the agency.

19 What do you think about the role of asset
20 forfeiture funds? How would you work to ensure that
21 the agency has the resources it needs and is not
depending on asset forfeiture in one case in
particular, as the way to fund the agency?

MS. SHIHATA: So my understanding is that
there are particular rules that govern how you can

1
2 use asset forfeiture funds and that, as a general
3 matter, they are supposed to supplement budgetary
4 needs for the department, but not supplant them.

5 I think it's very important that DOI
6 ensures it's following any Department of Justice
7 rules regarding asset forfeiture and any state rules
8 regarding asset forfeiture, so as not to jeopardize
9 the ability to continue receiving and using asset
10 forfeiture.

11 So I think that needs to be looked at
12 very carefully. And I think again, I plan to be a
13 relentless advocate for DOI's budget and to ensure
14 that the Mayor's Office, the City Council, and the
15 public at large really understand what's at stake
16 here when the department is not funded properly.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Do you think
18 there's also a role-- there's been more conversations
19 and similar investigative agencies across the
20 country, that are funded budgetarily by a percentage
21 of the city budget to preserve its independence, so
it's not going up and down depending on the political
or administrative whims or budget deficits. Are you
open to-- do you see a role in considering 'PEG-ing'
DOI's funding to a percentage of the City budget, as

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2 opposed to the budget, financial, or political whims
3 of a given moment?

4 MS. SHIHATA: I think that is certainly
5 one way to ensure DOI's independence and also the
6 appearance of its independence. And I believe you're
7 correct that other cities have followed that model.

8 My understanding is that the prior DOI
9 commissioner supported just such a proposal in the
10 City Charter revision process, and I'm certainly open
11 to considering that.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Shifting gears,
13 in December, the DOI published a report that
14 criticized the Conflict of Interest Board for
15 allowing city attorneys to represent other clients
16 without obtaining a formal written waiver that would
17 result in the publication of a formal written
18 opinion.

19 The report criticized the Conflicts of
20 Interest Board for not making redacted advisory
21 opinions available to the public as required by law.
COIB maintains that they have not done anything
wrong. What remedy would you recommend when there's a
disagreement between DOI and COIB about the

1
2 interpretation of laws governing the Conflicts of
Interest Board?

3 MS. SHIHATA: So DOI doesn't have the
4 power to force agencies to implement or accept its
5 determinations, but it can make them public, as DOI
6 has done here. I think there may also be a role to
7 play for the City's Corporation Counsel to weigh in
on the issue and give a definitive opinion about it.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Now, another
9 issue that's come up and you've heard too is--let me
10 see, is the fact that the importance of the
11 independence of this role, as I'm sure you know well
and can agree to, and in particular, making sure that
12 this role in the Department of Investigation, while
13 the nomination comes from City Hall, that there is a
14 clear wall of independence between DOI, City Hall,
and frankly every agency in city government.

15 And you've heard a number of questions to
16 this point already, really going to the fact that you
17 know, I think all of us, and in particular, think
18 that the independence of this office is sacred. And
you know, I think given your time as the federal
19 prosecutor as well, the federal restrictions like the
20 Hatch Act are very clear about ways in which to
21

1
2 preserve the independence of federal prosecutors when
3 it comes to their work in the federal government.

4 So, given all that's been asked about as
5 well, what concrete measures would you also put in
6 place to ensure that there is clear independence
7 between the DOI, every agency, including City Hall as
8 well?

9 MS. SHIHATA: I think the key is
10 investigative independence, that we are not-- DOI is
11 not providing details or specifics about ongoing
12 investigations to anyone. In certain contexts, there
13 are things like grand jury secrecy laws that legally
14 prevent any such information sharing from occurring,
15 but that, as a general matter, should go beyond just
16 those types of investigations and grand jury
17 concerns. I think you ensure independence of
18 investigations by having confidentiality. It protects
19 the investigation, and it protects independent
20 decision-making.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: I think to your
point too, and as you mentioned as well, you know,
preserving that independence becomes so important.
I'm sure you can agree, given the last four years as
well, the incredible work that DOI did, too, which

1
2 resulted in the federal cases that came forward as
3 well, just speaks to how important it is to have that
4 independence. So your consideration, thought, and
5 testimony in support of preserving the independence
6 of that office, too, is critical, I think. And it
7 highlights one of the main roles that DOI needs to
8 ensure it plays as it moves forward in city
9 government.

8 Another question I have as well is, uh,
9 you heard from Council Member Banks a bit about--
10 with respect to NYCHA, the way in which DOI can play
11 a role in continuing both building on the federal
12 consent decree, but also working separately and apart
13 from that too.

13 How do you take that lens to fighting
14 corruption and conflict of interest across all city
15 agencies? How would you ensure proactively that DOI
16 is fulfilling its mandate to root out waste and,
17 frankly, corruption and conflicts of interest at all
18 city agencies in addition to NYCHA?

18 MS. SHIHATA: I think it's very important
19 that DOI is looking at ways to find the systemic
20 risks in various areas and agencies.
21

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2 I think part of that can be gleaned from
3 past investigations that the DOI has done—making
4 sure, not just being focused on particular findings
5 in a particular investigation, but then stepping back
6 and taking a broader view to see what broader lessons
7 can be learned that can apply not just to that agency
8 but to other agencies as well—potentially issuing a
9 formal report about that and publicizing it, and
10 obviously engaging with agency heads to ensure that
11 they are not just aware of DOI's findings, but
12 implementing them and implementing
13 recommendations—and also being proactively engaged in
14 understanding why certain recommendations have not
15 been implemented and seeing if there's, you know,
16 workarounds to that.

14 Sometimes it may be funding issues, but
15 sometimes it may be the practicality of the
16 recommendation. And if that's the issue, then I think
17 DOI should be proactively trying to address that
18 because the goal here is prevention as much as
19 possible. That is better for everybody involved,
20 including the taxpayers. So, I think it's important
21 to look at ways we can do that, which may involve
data analytics. One of the things I'm interested in

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2 doing when I get there is understanding what DOI is
3 already doing in that regard and seeing how that can
4 be enhanced.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: I think
6 prevention is a key point as well. We've seen from
7 the last four years, across city agencies, it's a
8 lot, as you know well, it's a lot of work after the
9 fact to correct an issue—corrective action plans, and
10 ensure that whether it's violations of sanctuary laws
11 that have happened—that after the fact we were trying
12 to remedy—and we had a hearing about that earlier
13 this year in the Oversight Committee—we all benefit
14 from having preventative measures in place and
15 protections to ensure that violations of the law by
16 agencies or corruption are not ongoing.

17 So I think the more that DOI can take
18 that role, the better it is for the efficiency of
19 government overall, too.

20 Finally, in the past, advocates have
21 requested that community input be taken into
consideration when appointing Inspectors General,
particularly the NYPD Inspector General. Are you open
to such input? How would you solicit, if you are open

1
2 to that input, public participation in the selection
3 process here?

4 MS. SHIHATA: I am open to that input. I
5 think I would need to understand how that input in
6 the past has been received before expounding on
7 exactly what that might look like. But as a general
8 matter, I think the Office of the Inspector General
9 for the NYPD should have relationships with key
10 stakeholders, including advocates in that area. That
11 includes receiving input regarding who or what
12 qualifications would be ideal for a person in that
13 position.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you. Thank
15 you, Chair.

16 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. And seeing no
17 other members have questions, Ms. Shihata, you are
18 excused.

19 MS. SHIHATA: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON UNG: I now open up the floor
21 to the public for comment. We ask that you please
limit your comments to two minutes. If you wish to
speak, please fill out an appearance card with the
Sergeant of Arms, and you'll be given the opportunity
to make your comments. Also, if you have a written

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2 statement, please provide a copy of the statement to
3 the Sergeant of Arms.

4 I first called Ms. Maria Cruz Melendez
5 and Ms. Kristen Mace.

6 MS. MARIA CRUZ MELENDEZ: Good morning,
7 Madam Chair, and Members of the Committee. My name is
8 Maria Cruz Melendez, and I'm a partner at the law
9 firm Skadden, Arps in New York City. Prior to that, I
10 served for over a decade as an Assistant United
11 States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York,
12 where, among other things, I served as Deputy Chief
13 of the Public Integrity Section and Deputy Chief of
14 the Civil Rights Section.

15 I greatly appreciate the opportunity to
16 speak before you today in strong support of the
17 nomination of Nadia Shihata to serve as Commissioner
18 of the Department of Investigation.

19 During the entirety of my tenure at the
20 EDNY, I had the pleasure of working alongside Nadia,
21 and I know her to be an attorney of exceptional
integrity and judgment with a true dedication to
public service.

At EDNY, we worked together on various
matters, including as trial partners, and I saw

1
2 firsthand her skills as an investigator and advocate,
3 as well as her abilities in managing complex,
4 high-stakes matters with rigor and fairness.

5 As you're aware, Nadia held multiple
6 leadership roles at EDNY involving organized crime,
7 corruption, and civil rights. And in each of her
8 positions, she demonstrated not only legal expertise
9 but also a strong moral compass and a commitment to
10 doing what is right. She also earned the respect of
11 her peers, direct reports, and law enforcement
12 partners due to her professionalism and approach to
13 leadership.

14 Nadia works tirelessly, approaching every
15 case with care and precision, and she's deeply
16 committed to achieving justice for victims, while at
17 the same time bringing compassion and sound judgment
18 to her work—attributes that are essential for leading
19 an agency charged with maintaining accountability and
20 public trust.

21 Having myself investigated and prosecuted
cases together with DOI, I recognize that it is an
agency that requires independence, integrity, and
unwavering commitment to the rule of law. (TIMER)
Nadia embodies all of these qualities. I'm confident

1
2 that if confirmed, she will serve with distinction
3 and uphold the highest standards of this office.

4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you.

6 MS. KRISTIN MACE: Good morning. My name
7 is Kristen Mace, and I'm currently a partner at the
8 law firm of Covington and Burling. Thank you for
9 giving me the opportunity to speak today.

10 It is my honor to offer my unequivocal
11 support for the nomination of Nadia Shihata for
12 Commissioner of the New York City Department of
13 Investigation.

14 I previously served alongside Nadia
15 Shihata in the US Attorney's Office for the Eastern
16 District of New York. Nadia and I joined the US
17 Attorney's Office in the same year, I believe it was
18 2011, and I had the honor of working with Nadia for
19 more than a decade.

20 During the latter part of that period, I
21 served as Chief of the Criminal Division for the US
Attorney's Office and was responsible for the
supervision of all of the criminal investigations and
prosecutions of the office, including Nadia's work in
the areas of anti-corruption and combating the

1
2 victimization of vulnerable individuals and
3 communities.

4 Nadia's exacting preparation, tireless
5 dedication, fearless perseverance, and fairness made
6 her the model of what every citizen would want from a
7 prosecutor and a public servant. She made tough cases
8 and refused to be intimidated or deterred from the
9 mission. But she also approached every individual,
10 victim, witness, target, or criminal defendant with
11 the utmost independence and professionalism, and she
12 has always treated everyone with dignity and
13 fairness.

14 Even as Chief of the Criminal Division, I
15 often sought out Nadia's counsel and advice. She's an
16 exceptional strategic thinker and an accomplished
17 advocate, but more importantly, she was never
18 distracted from the goal by any type of influence or
19 bias.

20 I appreciated Nadia's counsel so much
21 because she is an independent thinker who stays
clear-eyed about the mission with a focus on the best
way to reach a just result and make New York City
safer and fairer for all.

1
2 I have never seen Nadia express or act
3 from bias. I have always known her to make
4 independent decisions based on the facts and the law
5 alone.

6 As a lawyer, and more importantly, as a
7 citizen of New York City, (TIMER) I'm delighted...

8 May I just finish? Thank you.

9 I'm delighted to know that if confirmed,
10 Nadia Shihata will be in a position to hold our
11 public officials to the highest ethical standards and
12 that if anyone strays from his or her duty, she will
13 fight to address a problem, ensure a just result, and
14 recommend necessary improvements.

15 I am confident that Nadia Shihata will be
16 one of the most effective commissioners New York City
17 has ever had. Thank you very much.

18 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you.

19 Seeing no other members of the public
20 signed up to speak, this public hearing is now
21 closed.

I would like to thank the candidate,
Members of the Committee, the committee staff, the
Sergeants at Arms, and the members of the public for
their participation in today's meeting.

COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES, ELECTIONS,
STANDARDS, AND ETHICS

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This meeting of the Committee on Rules,
Privileges, Elections, Standards, and Ethics is now
adjourned. [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 no interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date May 13, 2026