

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

NEW YORK CITY ADVISORY COMMISSION
ON PROPERTY TAX REFORM

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June 14, 2021
Start: 6:05 p.m.
Recess: 6:35 p.m.

HELD AT: Remote Hearing, Virtual Room 2

B E F O R E: Mark V. Shaw
Chair

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Mark V. Shaw
Allen P. Cappelli
Carol O'Cleireacain
Kenneth J. Knuckles
James Parrott
Gary Rodney
Elizabeth Velez

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS: Jacques Jiha
Commissioner of the Department
of Finance

Melanie Hartzog
Director of the Office of
Management and Budget

Latonia McKinney
Director of the City Council
Finance Division

Raymond Majewski
Deputy Director and Chief
Economist, Council Finance
Division

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Corey Bearak

Cleopatra Brown

Bernadette Ferrara

Trinisha Williams

Mary Ann Rothman

Sheila Lewandowski

Remysell Salas

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS : Recording started.

3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: OK. Just give me a
4 second. Good evening. Welcome to the remote hearing
5 of the New York City Advisory Commission on Property
6 Tax Reform. Everyone please turn on your videos at
7 this time. Silence all electronic devices. All
8 written testimony can be submitted at
9 nyc.gov/propertytaxreform/testimony. Closed
10 captioning is available and can be accessed by
11 clicking on the live script icon on the lower portion
12 of your Zoom menu bar. [speaking in Spanish] Thank
13 you. Chair, we are ready to begin.

14 CHAIR SHAW: Thank you, Sergeant. Hi,
15 my name is Mark Shaw. Um, I'm the senior advisor at
16 the CUNY Institute for State and Local Governance and
17 I'm the chair of the Advisory Commission. Um, good
18 evening. Today's Zoom hearing is the fourth of five
19 borough hearings on the preliminary report of the
20 Advisory Commission. A hearing is also scheduled for
21 Manhattan this Wednesday, June 16, at 6:00 p.m.
22 Hearings already occurred in Staten Island on May 11
23 and Brooklyn on May 27 and Queens on June 9. If you
24 are unable to attend your borough's hearing, please
25 know that members of the public may attend any

2 hearing regardless of their home borough. As a
3 reminder, all people wishing to testify must
4 register on the Advisory Commission's website at
5 least 24 hours prior to the start of the hearings.
6 Also, for members of the public who are listening who
7 would like to submit written testimony they may do so
8 at any time at nyc.gov/propertytaxreform/testimony.
9 Tonight's hearing will be broadcast in Spanish
10 through interpretation services and live streamed to
11 the New York City Council's virtual hearing room 3.
12 A link to this live stream can be, also be found at
13 the commission's website, nyc.gov/propertytaxreform
14 on the Hearings and Meetings tab. Fourteen people
15 are signed up to testify tonight. Before we begin
16 with public testimony, I want to say thank you to all
17 those members of the public who submitted written
18 testimony as well as those here tonight who are
19 taking time out of their schedules to testify on the
20 Advisory Commission's preliminary report. We value
21 what each of you have to say, so please know that
22 even if we don't directly respond to your testimonies
23 today we are listening and your testimony will be
24 part of our deliberations. In January 2020 the
25 commission released 10 preliminary recommendations to

2 reform the property tax system. Hearings were
3 initially planned to begin in March 2020, but delayed
4 due to COVID-19. We request that public testimony
5 specifically respond to the commission's 10
6 recommendations. I will now read the commission's 10
7 preliminary recommendations. One - the commission
8 recommends moving co-ops, condominiums, and rental
9 buildings with up to 10 units into a new residential
10 class along with one- to three-family homes. The
11 property tax system would continue to consist of four
12 classes of property - residential, large rentals,
13 utilities, and commercial. The commission recommends
14 using, two - the commission recommends using a sales-
15 based methodology to value all properties in the
16 residential class. Three - commission recommends
17 assessing every property in the residential class at
18 its full market value. Four - the commission
19 recommends that annual market value changes in the
20 new residential class be phased in over five years at
21 a rate of 20% per year and that assessed value growth
22 caps should be eliminated. Five - the commission
23 recommends create a partial homestead exemption for
24 primary resident owners with income below a certain
25 threshold. The exemption would be available to all

2 eligible primary resident owners in the residential
3 class and would additionally replace the current
4 condo, co-op tax abatement. Six - the commission
5 recommends creating a circuit breaker within the
6 property tax system to lower the property tax burden
7 on low-income primary resident owners based on the
8 ratio of property tax paid to income. Seven - the
9 commission recommends replacing the current class
10 share system with a system that prioritizes
11 predictable and transparent tax rates for property
12 owners. The new system would freeze the relationship
13 of tax rates among the tax classes for five-year
14 periods, after which time the city would, could,
15 would conduct a mandated study to analyze if
16 adjustments need to be made to maintain consistency
17 in the share of taxes relative to fair market value
18 borne by each class. Eight - the commission
19 recommends that current valuation methods should be
20 maintained for properties not in the new residential
21 class, that is, rental buildings with more than 10
22 units, utilities, and commercial. Nine - the
23 commission recommends a gradual transition to the new
24 system for current owners, with an immediate
25 transition into the new system whenever a property in

2 the new residential class is sold. And, finally, 10
3 - the commission recommends instituting comprehensive
4 reviews of the property tax system every 10 years.
5 I'd like to now introduce to the public and the, to
6 the other members, the other members of the
7 commission. Um, we have, I believe, with us in
8 addition to myself, um, four other commissioners
9 tonight and we'll, um, start with introductions in
10 alphabetical order. Carol O'Cleireacain.

11 COMMISSIONER O'CLEIREACAIN: Hi,
12 everyone. I'm having a little trouble here getting
13 myself on. Thank you. Um, I'm Carol O'Cleireacain
14 and I'm a resident of, ah, Manhattan, and I've been a
15 New Yorker since 1974. I have a co-op apartment on
16 the Upper West Side. I am currently a, um, adjunct
17 professional at Columbia School of International and
18 Public Affairs. I have been in the past both the
19 finance commissioner and the budget director of New
20 York City. Thank you.

21 CHAIR SHAW: Next up we have Kenneth
22 Knuckles.

23 COMMISSIONER KNUCKLES: Good even. Ah,
24 my name is Ken Knuckles. I am currently the vice
25 chair of the New York City Planning Commission. I am

2 a resident of the Bronx in the Wakefield section, ah,
3 where I have lived since 1984. I'm also a former
4 deputy Bronx borough president, and I look forward to
5 hearing your testimony this evening. Thank you.

6 CHAIR SHAW: Thank you, Ken. Next up we
7 James Parrott.

8 COMMISSIONER PARROTT: Good evening.
9 James Parrott. I'm the director of economic and
10 fiscal policies at the Center for New York City
11 Affairs at the New School. I have owned a single-
12 family house in Brooklyn for 25 years. I look
13 forward to hearing the testimony this evening. Thank
14 you.

15 CHAIR SHAW: And last, but certainly not
16 least, we have Elizabeth Velez, also of the Bronx.

17 COMMISSIONER VELEZ: Good evening,
18 everyone. Like, ah, like with [inaudible] Mark I am
19 a resident, ah, my name is Elizabeth Velez. I'm a
20 resident of the Bronx and a renter, ah, in the Bronx.
21 I, I rent. But I'm also a business owner, um, in, in
22 Manhattan. Thank you all for your contribution
23 coming up tonight, contribution to New York City and
24 this process by helping us, um, continue on in these
25 deliberations. Thank you, Mark.

2 CHAIR SHAW: Thank you, Elizabeth. In
3 addition to our commission members we also have with
4 the ex-officio members representing the mayor's
5 office and the City Council. I'd like to now turn
6 over to our moderator for the evening, Emre.

7 MODERATOR: Thank you, Chair Shaw. My
8 name is Emre Edev and I work with the New York City
9 Council's finance division. Before we begin, I want
10 to remind everyone that you'll be on mute until you
11 are recognized to speak, at which time you will be
12 unmuted by the Zoom host. If you mute yourself after
13 you have been unmuted you will need to be unmuted
14 again by the host. Please be aware that there could
15 be a delaying in muting and unmuting, so please be
16 patient. I will be calling on panelists to testify
17 one by one, so please listen for your name to be
18 called. Each panelist will have two minutes for
19 their testimony. Commission members, you have the
20 ability to unmute yourself during the hearing at any
21 point. So if you have any questions for a panelist,
22 you may unmute yourself at the appropriate time. But
23 please remember to go back on mute once you have
24 completed your question. We will now start with
25 testimony from elected officials, followed by the

2 general public. Panelists, once your name is called
3 a member of our staff will unmute you and the
4 Sergeant at Arms will you the go-ahead to begin.
5 Please wait for the sergeant to announce that you may
6 begin before delivering your testimony. We will
7 start with Corey Bearak, followed by Cleopatra Brown.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 COREY BEARAK: Thank you. I'm Corey
10 Bearak, and as I testified to you back in October
11 2018, I have researched and written and testified on
12 real property tax reform going back some years to my
13 time at Hofstra Law School. Much of my research and
14 recommendations are on my website,
15 strategicpublicpolicy.com and there's a link to all
16 my work at the end of this testimony. Um, my
17 research reflects my service in government to a City
18 Council member and two borough presidents, candidates
19 for citywide, state, and local offices, involvement
20 in civic groups, including cofounding and later
21 leading the borough-wide Queens Civic Congress. And
22 I've testified at many city hearings on this. And I
23 want to just, you know, it will quick to go into, ah,
24 my take on your recommendations. Um, I'm, number
25 one, lumping together the co-ops, condos, and rental

2 buildings with 10 or less units with the one- to
3 three-family homes. These are many moderate-income
4 co-ops, condos, and rentals that house moderate- and
5 lower-income New Yorkers, worse, I believe, that will
6 perpetuate the existing valuation inequities that
7 benefit the, the owners of some of the wealthiest and
8 most, most luxurious New York housing. Instead, I
9 suggest all residential property at market value and
10 apply a homestead exemption to assure affordability
11 of the home whether an owner occupied, one-, two-, or
12 three-family home, a condo, a cooperative unit, or
13 rental housing developed as such. This targets
14 relief where it ought to be and should be set
15 initially to maintain existing taxation levels to
16 those moderate-income homeowners and reducing the
17 taxes where inequities exist, like in places like
18 southeast Queens. To help lower-income residents to
19 circuit breaker, refundable, ought to come into play.
20 And two, you need to clarify the application of the
21 sales, ah, based methodologies proposed for
22 residential properties to apply to all co-ops and
23 condos that are luxury properties no longer get the
24 values akin to nearby rent-regulated housing.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

2 COREY BEARAK: Ah, for three, ah, full
3 value assessment must make sure to capture
4 immediately the unintended benefits received by non-
5 owner-occupied properties, class 1 properties, which
6 I value at least 6 billion dollars that could be
7 raised and would help fund, ah, the reforms that I am
8 proposing. It would also help return several hundred
9 thousand housing units to full residential use. On
10 four, the phase-in of fair market value needs to be
11 carefully reviewed as it benefits those without any
12 homestead exemption and may offer a financial benefit
13 that others will seek to institutionalize. Five,
14 rather than apply a homestead exemption just based on
15 income, it should be applied based on the value of
16 the property. A full value for class 1, I recommend,
17 ah, using the \$800,000, ah, value and for co-ops and
18 condo units \$650,000. I agree on the circuit breaker
19 and then on number seven the class share system has
20 helped to perspective inequities and repackaging it
21 differently changes nothing. Eight, on valuing
22 commercial and rental buildings based on use, so-
23 called income capitalization, it must be clearly
24 implemented so not to apply to any cooperative or
25 condominium housing. Again, I'm thinking in terms of

2 the, ah, luxury co-ops and condos in particular. And
3 nine, a graduation transition helps the wealthiest
4 owners the most and the system. All the data we need
5 exists can be set up immediately to help moderate-
6 and lower-income tax payers. And finally, number 10,
7 if we get this right now any further reviews would
8 only recommend minor, if any tweaks. So I want to
9 thank you and, you know, this fully testimony is on
10 my website and has also been submitted to the
11 commission and links to my prior work, again, is
12 available on my website.

13 MODERATOR: Thank you, Mr. Bearak. We
14 will now hear from Cleopatra Brown, followed by
15 Bernadette Ferrara.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 CLEOPATRA BROWN: Good evening, everyone.
18 I want to thank the New York City Advisory Commission
19 for the opportunity to share my testimony here today.
20 My name is Dr. Cleopatra Brown. I am a property
21 owner...

22 COMMISSIONER KNUCKLES: I can't hear her
23 very well.

24 MODERATOR: I'm sorry, Dr. Brown. Can
25 you move closer to your microphone.

2 CLEOPATRA BROWN: Yes. Can you hear me?

3 COMMISSIONER KNUCKLES: A little better,
4 but not much.

5 CLEOPATRA BROWN: OK, maybe if I can turn
6 my volume up. Is that better?

7 COMMISSIONER KNUCKLES: Yes.

8 CLEOPATRA BROWN: OK. Thank you. Once
9 again, my name is Dr. Cleopatra Brown. I'm a
10 property owner in Brownsville section of Brooklyn.
11 I've served six years in the United States Navy, from
12 August 1982 to May 1988, and two years in the
13 reservists here in New York City. I am currently the
14 chairperson of the Community Board 16 Veteran Affair
15 Committee, a member of the Community Board 3 Veterans
16 Committee, and advocate for my community and the
17 veteran population. On behalf of the Community Board
18 3 and Community Board 16 Veterans Affair Committee,
19 we respectfully request that the New York City
20 Department of Finance recognize and consider
21 establishing a real property tax exemption for Cold
22 War veterans under the New York State real property
23 tax law 458-B. Currently New York State, Hempstead,
24 Rockland, Suffolk, and Nassau County, just to name a
25 few, have adopted legislation and established real

2 property tax exemption for Cold War veterans. Cold
3 War veterans are male and female who served their
4 active duty in the United States forces from
5 September 2, 1945 to December 26, 1991, and was
6 discharged or released under honorable conditions.

7 According to the New York City Department of Finance
8 the only veterans who qualify for real property tax
9 exemption are those who served during the following
10 conflicts: World War I, World War II, the Korean,
11 Vietnam, Gulf War, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Currently
12 Cold War veterans are being denied and told that we
13 do not qualify as veterans because the New York City
14 real property tax law does not recognize Cold War
15 veterans. Every Cold War veteran bravely answered
16 the call to duty. We raised our hands and committed
17 to serve and protect our country.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 CLEOPATRA BROWN: And we accomplished
20 that mission. As Cold War veterans we have earned
21 the right to be recognized as a veteran and we are
22 respectfully requesting that New York City Department
23 of Finance recognize us as well. Community Board 3,
24 Community Board 16, and the Brooklyn Borough Board
25 have voted in favor and passed a resolution to amend

2 and expand New York City Department of Finance real
3 property tax to Cold War veterans. On behalf of the
4 Veterans Affairs Committee and the Cold War veterans
5 residing in New York City we recommend the Advisory
6 Committee to amend the New York City Department of
7 Finance real property tax exemption to include Cold
8 War veterans. I'd just like to thank the
9 commissioner for their time and consideration, and
10 the opportunity to express the concerns of my fellow
11 veterans. Thank you, and God bless you all.

12 MODERATOR: Thank you, Dr. Brown. Um, we
13 will now hear from Bernadette Ferrara, followed by
14 Trinisha Williams.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 BERNADETTE FERRARA: Thank you, good
17 evening. My name is Bernadette Ferrara and I am
18 testifying today as president of Van Ness
19 Neighborhood Alliance, a working class homeowner in
20 Van Ness, and a candidate for City Council to
21 represent Van Ness and the other communities within
22 Bronx District 15. I'd like to challenge three of
23 the proposed recommendations. Number one, moving co-
24 ops, condominiums, and rental buildings with up to 10
25 units into a new residential class, along with one-

2 to three-family homes. Number two, assessing every
3 property in the residential class at its full market
4 value. And, number three, annual market value
5 changes in the new residential class being phased in
6 over five years at 20% per year. The market price of
7 co-ops, condominiums, and rental buildings with up to
8 10 units will pull the assessed value of one- to
9 three-family homes up and property taxes along with
10 it. These recommendations will accelerate the middle
11 class flight out of the Bronx and City Council
12 District 15. The Bronx has the highest effect
13 property tax rate in New York City at 0.83% tax over
14 the other boroughs. For this reason I recommend
15 these proposals to the New York City Advisory
16 Commission. Number one - in calculating it fair
17 market value of a home limit comparables to homes of
18 similar style, size, and age within a one-mile
19 radius. Two - homeowners should be able to challenge
20 a property assessment quarterly instead of just once
21 a year. Three - veterans who purchase a primary
22 resident using money from their pensions ensures
23 settlements or bonuses can receive an exemption that
24 reduces their assessment property taxes, ah, and
25 school taxes. Four - lower the rate average seniors

2 can claim from 65 to 62. And five - extend the COVID
3 moratorium on the 3.25% interest rate on late
4 payments for homeowners whose annual income is less
5 than \$150,000. Thank you for giving me this
6 opportunity to let you know...

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

8 BERNADETTE FERRARA: ...how to make
9 property taxes fairer and more affordable to my
10 community. Thank you all for your work and your
11 time. Thank you.

12 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony.
13 We will now hear from Trinisha Williams, followed by
14 Mary Ann Rothman.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 TRINISHA WILLIAMS: Good evening. Thank
17 you so much for your time. I'm gonna sort of keep
18 myself pretty, pretty brief on my testimony. I'm a
19 resident of Brooklyn, New York. I've been a New
20 Yorker since birth. And I currently live in south
21 Brooklyn in the Flatlands area. In my co-op that we,
22 that I live in there are several, several of
23 residents are older, elderly, and a lot have been
24 affect recently by the COVID and have a lot of
25 financial, ah, ah, issues going on. And I just want

2 the commission to really be thoughtful on different
3 parts of the city when you're imposing this increase
4 in taxes. Um, I think some of the residents here
5 will need to be displaced if there was a significant
6 increase. I'm quite sure the commission has a lot of
7 rules and regulations and reasons for needing to make
8 some changes. But I just want you to be mindful that
9 there are people who are elderly, who have a lot of
10 financial, um, issues, and may not be able to sustain
11 such increases in property taxes. Thank you so much
12 for your time.

13 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony.

14 We'll now hear from Mary Ann Rothman, followed by
15 Sheila Lewandowski.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 MARY ANN ROTHMAN: Ah, good evening. My
18 name is Mary Ann Rothman. I'm the executive director
19 of the Council of New York Cooperatives and
20 Condominiums, representing hundreds of the housing
21 cooperatives and condominiums in all five boroughs of
22 New York City and beyond. Since 1990 when we founded
23 the Action Committee for Reasonable Real Estate
24 Taxes, we've advocated for fair, equitable, and
25 easily understood property taxes for all New York

2 City taxpayers. We thank the Advisory Commission for
3 your preliminary report, with 10 proposals that have
4 set us on a pathway to having one class for all of
5 the city's residential property with easily
6 understood assessments based on market value. I
7 should mention, or maybe I shouldn't, that this
8 doesn't, market value assessments doesn't necessarily
9 mean that taxes are going to be higher. It means
10 that we'll be able to clearly understand the
11 assessments that we receive on our property. Done
12 right, and we hope that the Department of Finance
13 will do it right, people of lower income and lower-
14 valued homes may find significant reductions in their
15 taxes. Um, but I digress. Um, I would like to
16 encourage the Advisory Commission to complete the
17 process of tax reform by creating a parallel
18 commercial class, which would include all of the
19 current class 3 and 4 properties, as well as the
20 rental properties remaining in class 2, all of which
21 would be, would continue to be assessed by current
22 methodology. We respectfully suggest that the four-
23 class system from S700A has long since outlived its
24 usefulness, so that there's no need to preserve its
25 complex class share system, whose balance was...

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

3 MARY ANN ROTHMAN: I'm gonna take an extra
4 minute. Whose balance was more frequently sacrificed
5 than preserved during the history of our current
6 system. The two-class property system that we
7 propose, one residential and one commercial, would be
8 inextricably interlocked by means of a fixed ratio
9 governing increases in their tax rate. We would
10 suggest that this ratio be 1:2. We support the
11 commission's recommend of a review five years into
12 the implementation of this comprehensive property tax
13 reform program. At that time reviewers should
14 consider whether the 1:2 residential to commercial
15 tax ratio needs fine tuning. Thank you for this
16 opportunity to express our views.

17 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony.

18 We will now hear from Sheila Lewandowski, followed by
19 Remyself Salas.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 SHEILA LEWANDOWSKI: Good evening. My
22 name is Sheila Lewandowski. I reside and work in the
23 occupied lands of the Lenape and Canarsee people,
24 otherwise known as Queens. Thank you to the Bronx
25 and to this committee for welcoming me this evening.

2 For accessibility purposes to those will be listening
3 later, I identify as a non-disabled middle-age cis
4 gender white woman of eastern European descent. I
5 have long brown streaked hair, streaked with gray,
6 back in a loose bun, and I'm wearing a dark blue
7 blouse, glasses, and earrings. I preface what I'm
8 going to say in support of the efforts to increase
9 equity in how real estate taxes are applied in New
10 York City. I own a home in Long Island City with my
11 former husband, to which he does not provide support.
12 We don't have children. I'm divorced, living on a
13 single income in the five-figure range since I run a
14 nonprofit art center that I founded. I have no
15 pension, um, and bought the house back in 2001 for
16 \$265,000. Lucky me, right? The city now values it
17 over a million, forget what the banks do. When we
18 bought the house the taxes were \$1200 annually. Last
19 year they were \$4500 and change. I share this
20 because I am scared that if I'm taxed at the full
21 market value of my home I won't be able to afford it.
22 I could not tell from your recommendations how those
23 who are not, who are land rich and income poor, or
24 income getting by would fare. I also encourage a
25 system where one's primary home is not taxed as an

2 unrealized gain. I, I recognize that I have access
3 to capital because of the value of my home, but even
4 that is tempered by my income and lack of family
5 capital since I grew up poor in public housing,
6 immigrant children, etcetera. The other
7 recommendation I do want to make is because I'm also
8 involved in Nonprofit New York and a lot of
9 nonprofits citywide and the arts sector citywide is
10 that the city find a way to relieve nonprofits,
11 especially small ones, community-based ones, of real
12 estate taxes that are passed on to them. I have
13 other stuff that I will, I will actually send in
14 writing. But, as an example, during the pandemic, I
15 run a nonprofit theater in Long Island City that
16 would be priced out if it weren't for the generosity
17 of the landlord. He...

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 SHEILA LEWANDOWSKI: Thank you. He
20 brought the rent down last year, but he had to
21 increase it because of the increase in his real
22 estate taxes. I know a number of nonprofits citywide
23 have been asking for years for some way for the city
24 to incentivize landlords renting long term to
25 nonprofits, um, and somehow relieving them of real

2 estate taxes without just passing it on through
3 there. I do add I'm first vice chair of my Community
4 Board 2 in Queens. I'm chair of the transportation
5 committee and I'm engaged in many ways. I add that
6 because I see this over and over again, and I don't
7 want to be displaced as someone who's engaged, and I
8 know there are other people citywide who've been in
9 their communities for generations who if you taxed
10 them at full market rate they're out. So, thank you
11 very much to Bronx, to the committee. Please do
12 right then.

13 COMMISSIONER O'CLEIREACAIN: Have you,
14 ah, I hate to put a burden on you, but I'll ask this
15 question anyway. Have you submitted written
16 testimony on this, or is there some way in which you
17 could just write up what you've just given us?

18 SHEILA LEWANDOWSKI: Yeah, I actually
19 typed this up about an hour ago, so I will send it to
20 you.

21 COMMISSIONER O'CLEIREACAIN: Thank you,
22 thank you, appreciate it.

23 SHEILA LEWANDOWSKI: Thank you,
24 Commissioner.

2 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony.

3 Ah, we'll now hear from Remy Sell Salas.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 REMYSELL SALAS: Hello. Thank you for
6 having me today for the opportunity to testify. My
7 name is Remy Salas. Um, I'm here as a member of the
8 PSC Union that represents, um, about 30,000 faculty
9 and staff [inaudible] and as an adjunct professor at
10 BFCC, um, and a lifelong resident of the Bronx, and
11 also a property owner in the Bronx, ah, we want to
12 call your attention to a significant source of
13 untapped revenue from the property tax exemption
14 given to private universities a, in New York City,
15 specifically NYU and Columbia. NYU and Columbia have
16 a massive expanded, a massively expanded and real
17 estate footprint in recent decades, um, and proposed
18 their real estate investment, um, in New York City.
19 According to 2018 the potential of property tax
20 responsibility of NYU, ah, it's, it's almost about
21 200 million. And while Columbia University would be
22 almost at 275 million, according to the Department of
23 Finance foreman. We are proposing to, we are
24 proposing a rethink of those tax exemptions as a one
25 way to invest and provide needed resources to New

2 York's public university, CUNY. This is not an
3 attack, um, towards NYU or Columbia, but we've,
4 because we value our colleagues as well as the
5 internet, intellectual community that has generated
6 by NYU and Columbia, which provided a lot of
7 resources in New York City. But while NYU and
8 Columbia pay no property taxes and their student get
9 so much benefits of small classes and full-time
10 professors and, um, housers and, and just a lot of,
11 ah, equipment for their libraries. CUNY students
12 which educates my, majority of low-income students
13 and native New Yorkers have not had, have not had any
14 resources to help them deal with the crowded
15 classrooms, leaky ceilings...

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 REMYSELL SALAS: ...as well as a
18 shortchange of professors. So that where, we are
19 proposing and hopefully in the spirit of equity we
20 are proposing that the commission could reconsider
21 the tax exemption of NYU and Columbia that collects,
22 that it collect annually. And invest the revenue in
23 CUNY, the people's universe of New York, while the
24 majority of New Yorkers, the university that the
25 majority of New Yorkers attend. Thank you so much.

2 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony.
3 Ah, this concludes the public testimony. If we have
4 inadvertently forgotten to call on someone to
5 testify, if that person could use the raise hand
6 function and raise their hand in Zoom, we will try to
7 hear from you now. Chair Shaw, it appears that no
8 other members of the public would like to testify, so
9 I'm going to hand it back to you.

10 CHAIR SHAW: Thank you, Emre. I'd like
11 to thank all the members of the public and elected
12 officials who joined us tonight to give feedback on
13 the commission's preliminary report. Your comments
14 are as, are important as the commission develops its
15 final recommendations. As a reminder, the commission
16 will be holding virtual hearing, a virtual hearing in
17 Manhattan on June 16. As I mentioned earlier,
18 hearings occurred in Staten Island on May 11,
19 Brooklyn on May 27, and Queens on June 9. Members of
20 the public may attend any hearing, regardless of
21 their home borough. If you wish to testify you must
22 register on the Advisory Commission's website at
23 least 24 hours prior to the start of the hearings.
24 Also, for members of the public who are listening and
25 would like to submit written testimony, you may do so

2 at any time. To register to testify or submit
3 written testimony please visit the commission's
4 website at nyc.gov/propertytaxreform. Finally, I'd
5 like to thank the members of the commission for their
6 time tonight and especially the staffs of the City
7 Council and the Mayor's Office for making this
8 hearing possible. Good evening, everybody.

9 MODERATOR: Chair Shaw?

10 CHAIR SHAW: Yes?

11 MODERATOR: We have a raised hand, sorry,
12 from Mary Ann Rothman.

13 CHAIR SHAW: Um, go ahead, Mary Ann.

14 MARY ANN ROTHMAN: Oh, OK. Ah, I'm, I'm
15 wondering, ah, if there are deadline on the
16 submission of, ah, testimony or additional testimony?
17 Would we be able to still submit after Wednesday?

18 CHAIR SHAW: Ah, you, you will be able to
19 still submit after Wednesday, and we welcome all
20 testimony. As soon as we're done with the hearings
21 we're gonna start to have, um, discussions amongst
22 the commission members to try to wrap up some final
23 recommendations. So the sooner the better, but
24 absolutely feel free to spend an extra couple days if
25 need be.

2 MARY ANN ROTHMAN: Thank you.

3 CHAIR SHAW: And with that I think we're
4 saying good night.

5 MODERATOR: Thank you.

6 CHAIR SHAW: Thanks.

7 UNIDENTIFIED: Good night.

8 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you, good night
9 everyone.

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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 July 13, 2021