

1 COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS 1

2 CITY COUNCIL
3 CITY OF NEW YORK

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5 TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

6 Of the

7 COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

8 February 13, 2019
9 Start: 12:07 p.m.
10 Recess: 12:20 p.m.

11 HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

12 B E F O R E: KAREN KOSLOWITZ
13 Chairperson

14 COUNCIL MEMBERS:

15 ANDRIENNE E. ADAMS
16 MARGARET S. CHIN
17 ROBERT E. CORNEGY, JR.
18 RAFAEL L. ESPINAL, JR.
19 VANESSA L. GIBSON
20 COREY D. JOHNSON
21 RORY I. LANCMAN
22 STEVE MATTEO
23 RITCHIE J. TORRES
24 MARK TREYGER
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COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

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

2 [gavel]

3 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: I call the
4 meeting to order of the Rules, Privileges and
5 Elections Committee. Good morning and welcome to the
6 Committee on Rules, Privileges and Elections. My name
7 is Karen Koslowitz and I am the Chair of this
8 committee. Before we begin this hearing, I would like
9 to introduce the Rules Committee Council Members and
10 additional Council Member who have joined us today.
11 To my left is Council Member Ritchie Torres, Council
12 Member Margaret Chin, Council Member Matteo once...
13 Council Member Adams and of course our Speaker,
14 Council Member Johnson and Council Member Rory
15 Lancman and Council Member Vanessa Gibson who has
16 snuck up on me. Before we begin... is there anybody
17 else here, okay. First, we are honored that our
18 Speaker, Corey Johnson who is a member of this
19 Committee has joined us as he usually does. The other
20 members of the Committee I introduced them already
21 today and order of business, today the Rules
22 Committee will vote on a Pre-Considered Resolution
23 proposing certain changes to the Council's standing
24 committee pursuant to rule 7.00 of the rules of the
25 council. Specifically, the Resolution proposes

2 dissolving the Committee on For Hire Vehicles which
3 has jurisdiction over the Taxi and Limousine
4 Commission. In addition, as proposed by this
5 Resolution, Taxi and Limousine Commission
6 jurisdiction would be transferred to the Committee on
7 Transportation upon the dissolution of the Committee
8 on For Hire Vehicles. Before we vote on the proposed
9 Resolution, I invite comments from our Committee
10 Members, we will begin with comments from our
11 Speaker.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Good afternoon,
13 thank you Chair Koslowitz, good morning. My name is
14 Cory Johnson, I am the Speaker of the City Council
15 and I want to thank Chair Koslowitz for her
16 leadership on this Committee and on the important
17 issue we are discussing at today's hearing and I want
18 to thank all of the colleagues that are with us this
19 morning, members of this important Committee. Today
20 the Council Rules Committee will consider a
21 Resolution amending rule .70 of the rules of the
22 Council in relation to dissolving a standing
23 Committee and transferring its jurisdiction. This
24 Resolution will dissolve the For-Hire Vehicle
25 Committee into the Transportation Committee. This is

2 not something that we do lightly, nor does... nor is it
3 something that any of us do as individuals. We are
4 here today at the Rules Committee taking action
5 together at the behest of this body, united against
6 intolerance and striving to create an environment in
7 which we can best serve the people of New York City.
8 This Resolution is a response from the entire City
9 Council to the actions of Council Member Ruben Diaz,
10 Sr. who made homophobic comments about this Council
11 and about this city and its leadership and has not
12 apologized nor shown any remorse since doing so.
13 Instead, he has doubled and tripled down causing more
14 pain for his colleagues and pouring salt into wounds
15 rather than attempting to heal them. Members of this
16 Council have spoken forcefully on this issue both
17 publicly and privately, many of us, including myself
18 have called on Council Member Diaz to resign as he
19 shows no intention of doing so. This Council is
20 acting swiftly to remove him from a leadership
21 position. His comments and his actions since the
22 comments came to light have created an environment in
23 which he can no longer effectively serve as Chair of
24 any Committee in this body. The issue of For Hire
25 Vehicles in New York City has had a profound impact

2 on people's lives and we need to have confidence in
3 the Council's ability to oversee this industry. I am
4 extremely proud of the work that the For-Hire
5 Vehicles Committee has done and I'm proud of the
6 Council's oversight of this industry, it will
7 continue, it must continue without distraction and
8 without division. We have passed important
9 legislation through this Committee that reflects our
10 main priorities on the issue including minimum pay
11 for drivers and pausing the expansion of for hire
12 vehicles. We have given the Taxi and Limousine
13 Commission the authority it needs to continue this
14 important work and our robust oversight of the TLC
15 and the For-Hire Vehicle industry will continue under
16 the Council's Transportation Committee. It is my hope
17 today that this will begin a healing process for the
18 entire Council. I want to thank my colleagues for
19 their friendship and support in what has been a
20 difficult time for me, for all of us, for the body,
21 for the staff here at the Council and for the entire
22 city. I'm so proud of the work that this Council has
23 done so far, what we've accomplished together as a
24 legislative body, the possibilities of what we can
25 continue to do together to make life better for our

2 neighbors are limitless and I look forward to getting
3 back to the work, the important work that remains
4 before us. Thank you Chair Koslowitz.

5 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you and I
6 would like to make a statement. I have become more
7 and more dismayed at the conduct of Council Member
8 Ruben Diaz, his reprehensible statements combined
9 with his refusal to apologize and his lack of remorse
10 have motivated me to introduce the Resolution we will
11 vote on today. Basically, I no longer have any
12 confidence that Mr. Diaz is fit to serve as Chair of
13 a New York City Council Committee. In light of Mr.
14 Diaz's ongoing destructive actions, I encourage my
15 Council colleagues to support this Resolution to
16 dissolve the For-Hire Vehicles Committee over which
17 he serves as Chair and to move all of its matters to
18 the Transportation Committee. I'm going to open the
19 floor to my colleagues for any comments they may have
20 at this time. Council Member Torres.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Thank you Madame
22 Chair, thank you Mr. Speaker. Now here in the Council
23 we believe in redemption, but Reverend Diaz has been
24 given more than enough chances to redeem himself.
25 From the moment he entered the City Council he has

2 been treated with more grace and generosity than he
3 deserves often by LGBT colleagues and staffers whose
4 dignity and humanity he has spent his political life
5 demeaning. When it comes to his latest example of
6 hate speech, the reverend has woefully ignored
7 countless pleas for even the barest apology, the
8 barest acknowledgement of the wrong he has done and
9 the pain he has caused. I for one do not want his
10 damn apology, I want the Council to make an example
11 of him and make an example of him we will. Today we
12 will let it be known that when an elected official
13 uses the power of his office to stoke the fires of
14 bigotry there will be consequences and those
15 consequences will be severe and swift. But it must
16 also be said that when the Council Member crusades
17 against LGBT New Yorkers, when he rails against a
18 woman's right to choose, when he rolls out the red
19 carpet for Ted Cruz in the Bronx, when he holds
20 rallies with right wing hate groups, when he
21 weaponizes religion in the service of fear, hate and
22 oppression let's be clear the Reverend is not
23 speaking for the Bronx, he's speaking only for
24 himself and for a fanatical few. The culture war
25 crusade of Reverend Diaz bears no resemblance to the

2 actual concerns of Bronx residents who care about
3 decent jobs, affordable homes, safe streets, who care
4 about the ability to pay the rent, to put food on the
5 table to keep their families afloat. As an out and
6 proud Afro Latino, born and raised in the Bronx, I do
7 not recognize the borough he claims to represent. The
8 Bronx that I have known and loved for as long as I
9 have lived is morally bigger and better than the
10 small-minded cultural war politics of Council Member
11 Diaz. The Reverend may have been dually elected by
12 the residents of district 18 but he does not truly
13 represent them and as a relic of a hateful past he
14 never will.

15 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Anybody else have
16 any comments? Okay, seeing no further comments we
17 will now take the vote on Pre-Considered Resolution
18 which concerns amending rule 7.00 of the rules of the
19 Council in relation to dissolving the Committee on
20 For Hire Vehicles and transferring its jurisdiction
21 to the Committee on Transportation. I will... will you
22 please call the roll for a vote?

23 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: William Martin,
24 Committee Clerk, roll call vote Committee on Rules,
25 Chair Koslowitz?

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2 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: I absolutely vote
3 aye, absolutely.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Gibson?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Permission to
6 explain my vote? Thank you, thank you Madame Chair
7 and thank you Mr. Speaker and all of my colleagues
8 here and it's... you know it's, it's a very
9 uncomfortable position that we find ourselves in here
10 at the City Council during this time. The past few
11 days have been extremely challenging for all of us,
12 for many New Yorkers that have felt the brunt of an
13 elected official's hateful words and remarks and
14 certainly not new to hate across this city. No
15 reflection of us and our values and our principles
16 but our colleague has had a long history of hateful
17 words and actions. And I think the saddest of this
18 entire situation is that understanding your personal
19 views but recognizing that your words impact people
20 and offering an apology is the simplest measure of
21 redemption that we could ask for and I apologize to
22 you my Speaker and to all of my colleagues and really
23 every New Yorker that has felt disrespected and
24 shamed at the words of an elected official. It is not
25 a reflection of this City Council, not a reflection

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2 of this body and certainly not a reflection of New
3 York and as Council Member Torres mentioned on behalf
4 of the Bronx, the borough that I am so proud to serve
5 I never want any Bronxite to feel that all elected
6 officials have the same positions as our colleague
7 and while the action that we take today may not
8 change who he is as a person I am reminded of the
9 words of Maya Angelou when she said, "when people
10 show you who they are believe them" and that is true
11 in every facet of life. And so, we are constantly
12 reminded of the person that was elected to district
13 18 and it is very unfortunate and so I feel the need
14 to apologize on behalf of my constituents in the
15 Bronx who have felt this, my staff and just everyone
16 who has felt these harsh words personally. Please
17 understand that we take words and actions very
18 seriously in this City Council and I've apologized to
19 Commissioner Meera Joshi as well who I've spoken to
20 personally and I know has felt a lot of disrespect
21 and with that I vote aye on this measure and I thank
22 Chair Koslowitz and our Speaker for your incredible
23 leadership during a challenging time. Thank you.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Chin?

25 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: [off mic] Aye.

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Cornegy?

3 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: [off mic] I vote
4 aye.

5 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Espinal?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ESPINAL: I'm standing
7 with all my friends, I vote aye.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Lancman?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: Aye.

10 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Torres?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I vote aye.

12 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Treyger?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Aye.

14 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Adams?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: [off mic] Aye.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Matteo? Speaker
17 Johnson?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: With regret for
19 trying to give someone an additional chance that they
20 didn't deserve and apologies for that mistake, I vote
21 aye.

22 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: By a vote of 11
23 in the affirmative, zero in the negative and no
24 abstentions the Resolution has been adopted by the
25 Committee.

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CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: This meeting is
adjourned.

[gavel]

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

February 28, 2019