

BOARD OF ELECTIONS
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

42 Broadway - 6th floor
Commissioners' Hearing Room
New York, NY 10004
November 24, 2020
1:30 - 2:04 p.m.

November 24, 2020

PRESENT:

President Patricia Ann Taylor

Secretary Frederic Umane

Commissioner Jose Araujo

Commissioner Miguelina Camilo

Commissioner Michael Michel

Commissioner Gino Marmorato

Commissioner Simon Shamoun

Commissioner Tiffany Townsend

Commissioner John Wm. Zaccone

Michael J. Ryan, Executive Director

Pamela Perkins, Administrative Manager

Georgea Kontzamanis, Operations Manager

Steven Denkberg, Commissioners' Counsel

Kenneth Moltner, Commissioners' Counsel

Valerie Vazquez, Communications Director

Rafael Savino, Deputy General Counsel

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2 (The meeting commenced at 1:30 p.m.)

3 MR. MICHAEL J. RYAN: Commissioner
4 Marmarato?

5 COMMISSIONER GINO MARMORATO: Present,
6 good afternoon, everyone.

7 MR. RYAN: Good afternoon. Commissioner
8 Michel?

9 COMMISSIONER MICHAEL MICHEL: Good
10 afternoon. Present.

11 MR. RYAN: Good afternoon. Commissioner
12 Pepe-Souvenir?

13 COMMISSIONER PEPE-SOUVENIR: Good
14 afternoon, present.

15 MR. RYAN: Good afternoon. Commissioner
16 Shamoun?

17 COMMISSIONER SHAMOUN: Present, thank
18 you.

19 MR. RYAN: You're welcome. Commissioner
20 Townsend?

21 COMMISSIONER TIFFANY TOWNSEND: Good
22 afternoon, present.

23 MR. RYAN: Good afternoon. Commissioner
24 Zacccone?

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2 COMMISSIONER JOHN WM. ZACCONE: Good
3 afternoon, present.

4 MR. RYAN: Good afternoon. That
5 concludes the commissioner roll call. I am
6 Michael Ryan, I'm the executive director of the
7 Board of Elections. Appearing elsewhere in the
8 building are participating administrative manager
9 Pamela Perkins, operations manager, Georgea
10 Kontazmanis. Also appearing remotely are counsels
11 to the commissioners, Steven Denkberg and Kenneth
12 Moltner, as well as the communications director,
13 Valerie Vazquez. Seated before me, at the table
14 is the deputy general counsel of the agency,
15 Rafael Savino. Did I leave anybody out? I don't
16 believe so. Okay. That said, President Taylor,
17 prior to the start of the meeting would like to
18 be recognized, President Taylor.

19 PRESIDENT PATRICIA ANNE TAYLOR: Thank
20 you, Mr. Ryan. Good afternoon everyone. I have
21 assigned myself a couple of duties to executive
22 this afternoon, one of which is going to be
23 somewhat joyful, but the other one not so much.
24 To begin with, it's with a somewhat heavy heart

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2 that I ask you today to join me in taking a
3 moment to recognize and honor the passing of
4 Mayor David N. Dinkins, who was elected mayor of
5 New York City in 1989, serving from 1990 through
6 1993. Mayor Dinkins died yesterday at the age of
7 93.

8 In addition to being the first mayor of
9 New York City who was a person of color, Mayor
10 Dinkins was also the first person of color to be
11 appointed as president of New York City's Board
12 of Elections. He served in this position from
13 1972 to 1973, prior to becoming the president of
14 the borough of Manhattan.

15 I myself am pleased to acknowledge that
16 as the 2020 president of the board, I follow in
17 the footsteps of Mayor David N. Dinkins, and I
18 ask for a moment of silence in his remembrance.
19 Thank you.

20 As my second, more joyful obligation I
21 wish to thank each and every person within the
22 sound of my voice, a heartfelt and happy
23 Thanksgiving Day on Thursday, November 26, 2020.
24 I most particularly wish a peaceful Thanksgiving

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2 Day to our staff here at the Board of Elections,
3 both to the headquarters staff and to all those
4 staff members working in our borough offices and
5 our various other sites, and so to my colleagues,
6 my fellow commissioners.

7 I thank each of you for all you have
8 done try to carry out an uneventful election
9 process this year in the face of so many
10 obstacles. And I thank also all of the coworkers
11 throughout the city and the NYPD who came to help
12 us. Happy Thanksgiving to you all. Mr. Ryan.

13 MR. RYAN: Yes. Just one second.

14 PRESIDENT TAYLOR: Oh, sorry.

15 MR. RYAN: No, that's okay. I'm just,
16 I'm just checking a number on something.

17 COMMISSIONER MIGUELINA CAMILO: And I'll
18 just say thank you to our president for that
19 beautiful message, thank you.

20 PRESIDENT TAYLOR: Oh, thank you.

21 MR. RYAN: Okay. Sorry about that. Yes,
22 and thank you again, President Taylor. So, we had
23 a few reports that we did not get to last week,
24 basically all straightforward reports regarding

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2 the follow up to the general election. We did
3 have, out of the 1,198 poll sites, we did have
4 about 70 sites that opened late. There were some
5 issues with, environmental issues, and about 35
6 of those had to be reset based on the floor plan
7 or the schematic. And we had a total of eight
8 Department of Education sites, and 15 NYCHA sites
9 that reported incidents that required solutions
10 in order for them to be opened on time.
11 Considering 1,200 poll sites, we always strive
12 for zero late openings. However, that was a very
13 small percentage, considering the overall number
14 of poll sites.

15 And just to give a flavor of the
16 complexity of conducting an election and the
17 amount of equipment that needs to be deployed, at
18 the 1,198 poll sites, we deployed 4,069 DS200
19 scanners and 1,273 ADA compliant marking devices,
20 as well as 6,830 e-poll books, which resulted
21 also in 5,632 supply carts and 15,844 privacy
22 booths.

23 We had 141 field technicians, and those
24 were BOE employees and 90 ES&S techs to service

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2 708 scanner incidents throughout Election Day. We
3 had 287 scanners that had a ballot jam and all of
4 those were resolved without taking equipment out
5 of service on election day.

6 So, considering the volume, and the
7 number of voters and the number of ballots that
8 passed through those machines, those are all good
9 performance numbers and we certainly had enough
10 field staff between the board employees and the
11 ES&S employees to make sure that any issues that
12 did arise were resolved quickly.

13 We did have, and I had reported this
14 prior to the election, but we did deploy and I
15 won't go through all the individual pieces of
16 equipment, but we had a total of 8,122 pieces of
17 individual equipment deployed on election day,
18 between tables, chairs, scanners and the like, to
19 services the voters.

20 We had early voting, we had 88 poll
21 sites. We did not have any significant issues
22 with any of the cradle point routers throughout
23 early voting. Those issues were resolved prior to
24 opening on the second day and did not reoccur. So

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2 the significance with that is once we get the
3 early voting sites up and running, everything
4 performed very well throughout the remainder of
5 the nine days.

6 We had also the election insight, which
7 we are still working on which is the check in,
8 the electronic check in for the poll workers.
9 It's not the only way that we check poll workers
10 in. We want to move towards 100 percent poll
11 worker check in through that process, but it has
12 been increasing with every election. And we had
13 all, we had 100 percent connectivity for election
14 insight on election day and a substantial
15 majority of our poll worker check ins occurred
16 through that process.

17 We had ENR was conducted, election night
18 reporting was conducted at the police precincts
19 in four out of the five boroughs, and Staten
20 Island, given its challenges that are geographic
21 in nature and the spread out of the precincts, in
22 Staten Island, it was conducted at the voting
23 machine facility. But I had reported out on the
24 election night reporting last week. It was just

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2 that one little element that we did not report
3 out on.

4 We had poll worker vacancies were at two
5 percent. So that would be two percent of the poll
6 workers that might have been needed for election
7 day were unassigned prior to election day but all
8 of those were filled and we had a substantial
9 reserve pool for election day and we certainly
10 had sufficient staff.

11 And that having been said, and we hope
12 that this is something that continues moving
13 forward. We had more interest in becoming a poll
14 worker for this election than we had actual poll
15 worker positions that could be available for
16 folks to work. So we're hoping that that level of
17 enthusiasm continues moving forward,
18 particularly, you know, in this upcoming year,
19 we're already going to have what I'll refer to
20 loosely as extra election events. We'll have a
21 special already for February, and then we're
22 probably going to have a couple more events,
23 special election events beyond that, and then the
24 June primary and the November general election.

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2 So we're hoping that that level of enthusiasm
3 continues.

4 We also have now stockpiled that list of
5 individuals that have expressed interest and some
6 of whom have received training so that we can
7 continue to do that poll worker outreach over the
8 course of time and hopefully expand on that, and
9 follow up with these folks and let them know that
10 we appreciated their interest but we simply ran
11 out of positions, but that they should not give
12 up. Right. Well, certainly and Ms. Sandow reminds
13 me that in addition, we have increased the number
14 of poll worker positions to accommodate the line
15 management position, which helped facilitate the
16 process at the election sites where there were
17 high volumes of voters. And certainly we would
18 not have been able to get through this process
19 without the addition of those additional
20 positions to help service the voters.

21 We had a total of 585 sites on election
22 day where the vendors delivered and constructed
23 temporary ramps. Of the 88 early voting sites, we
24 had 21 such locations and in addition, including

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2 both early voting sites and election day sites,
3 we had 606, as well as a total of 806 sites where
4 temporary measures were deployed to ensure
5 compliance with the Americans with Disabilities
6 Act.

7 We had ADA absentee ballots that we used
8 the same vendor that we used last go round in
9 June and we 1,253 individuals apply accessible
10 ballots. So that was up quite substantially from
11 June and suspect that we had individuals that
12 were not aware that the ADA ballots were
13 available. And now that they are becoming aware,
14 they are taking advantage of that. So that was
15 certainly, we wanted to highlight and also take
16 the opportunity to reinforce with voters that
17 that is an opportunity that they can avail
18 themselves of to ensure voters' ability to fully
19 participate in the election process in compliance
20 with the Americans with Disabilities Act,
21 irrespective of how they choose to exercise the
22 franchise, whether that be in person or whether
23 that be by way of absentee. So that's a very
24 important advancement.

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2 So, all of that having been said and to
3 ensure that no one gets too tired of hearing my
4 voice, I will turn over the presentation to Ms.
5 Vazquez so that she can provide the update with
6 respect to the public education program that we
7 engaged in which has played to rave reviews,
8 largely with respect, although it's always a team
9 effort, a lot of the creative aspects of this
10 were, are credited to Ms. Vazquez. So, Ms.
11 Vazquez, please proceed.

12 MS. VALERIA VAZQUEZ: Thank you, Mr.
13 Ryan.

14 INTERPRETER: I'm sorry to interrupt.
15 This is the sign language interpreter. The other
16 interpreter has been waiting in the room and he
17 has to be let in. Thank you.

18 MR. RYAN: Oh, okay.

19 MS. KONTAZMANIS: Thank you. Sorry about
20 that.

21 MR. RYAN: The waiting room. I almost --
22 I'm getting a little old. I almost got up and
23 went to the door. I apologize. [laughter] All
24 right, there we go. Vladimir, is that it? Okay.

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2 We got him.

3 INTERPRETER: Thank you.

4 MS. VAZQUEZ: Thank you. Good afternoon,
5 commissioners and executive management. I would
6 like to begin by thanking both the commissioners
7 and executive mgmt as well as the public
8 education, the commission, the public education
9 committee for their leadership and commitment to
10 this robust public education campaign that the
11 Board launched in August to educate voters on
12 what we call the Vote Safe NYC campaign.

13 In terms of digital impressions, the
14 impressions were remarkable. We received a total
15 of 104 million impressions on our various
16 campaigns that we went live with from August
17 through the general election. Specifically, how
18 to fill out an absentee ballot video garnered
19 over four million views. Our public education
20 campaign regarding the three ways that voters can
21 vote, voting via absentee, early voting, or on
22 election day received a total of 70 million
23 impressions.

24 Not only did -- we did not only rely on

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2 our digital campaigns, but we had an aggressive
3 print campaign that we ran ads in all the
4 language required newspapers, citywide newspapers
5 and a strong focus on local community newspapers.
6 In terms of the circulation for the campaign for
7 our Vote Safe NYC campaign, which again informed
8 voters of the availability of requesting an
9 absentee ballot, the dates of the early voting as
10 well as the elections dates and always a
11 consistent push to our website, so they can find
12 their assigned poll sites was a total of 2.5
13 million circulation, as well as our out of home.
14 We had over 100 million impressions, a
15 combination between our Link kiosks, subways and
16 buses, so those messaging alone received over 100
17 million impressions.

18 And we were very active on Twitter. We
19 nearly doubled our Twitter following. We had an
20 engagement of 41,963, meaning we had direct
21 messaging and correspondence with those voters
22 director. We received a total of 59 million
23 impressions. And that means a combination of the
24 content that we pushed out, the content that we

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2 replied to as well as direct messages. We had a
3 total of 40,000 audience messages throughout this
4 campaign.

5 And overall, I do believe this was a
6 success. I thank the commissioners and executive
7 management for really allowing us that
8 opportunity to be creative and have this multi-
9 prong approach to educating the voters. I think,
10 I think the success was in lots of the feedback
11 that we received on our various channels. And we
12 expect to replicate this as we move on to rank
13 choice voting.

14 MR. RYAN: So, Ms. Vazquez, can you
15 just, for my edification and probably others, can
16 you just briefly tell us the significance of the
17 impressions. What that means in a digital
18 communication environment?

19 MS. VAZQUEZ: It means views. So that
20 means how many people actually -- how many people
21 actually saw these, either it was pushed content
22 that we were sending out or the videos
23 themselves. We also really learned that voters
24 resonated with our videos. We worked really hard

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2 on keeping the script simple, very user friendly,
3 getting all of our content into usually a 60
4 second timeframe. We found that animation was
5 successful and really we've kept the videos on
6 our website and we've pushed them out.

7 We found that most of our good
8 government partners really helped us in terms
9 their reciprocal sharing of our information. So
10 we found that all of the content, even on their
11 pages was Board content. So again, that helped
12 for not only helping increase our impressions,
13 but serving as -- allow the Board to be the
14 source for all of the information. And I think
15 that we found the traffic on our Twitter pages
16 and our social media pages reflected that. We
17 really found our voice and we felt that we were
18 able to instill confidence in the voters via
19 these platforms.

20 MR. RYAN: So, thank you for that
21 clarification and I will say that almost
22 universally the feedback that we have received as
23 a board for the outreach for this election
24 underscores everything that Ms. Vazquez just

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2 shared. It has been a tremendous amount of praise
3 for the Board's efforts. And I think as we move
4 through certification next week, we'll be able to
5 demonstrate a particular aspect of that success
6 numerically that we're not prepared to do that
7 today, but I think that's going to be really a
8 important thing to share with folks, as well as
9 other elements of the process. The absentee
10 ballot envelope redesign, the red X on the
11 envelope, which I believe was very successful in
12 highlighting the area where folks are supposed to
13 sign the ballot envelope to ensure that their
14 vote is able to be counted legally.

15 So all of that is a tremendous -- as I
16 said, it's a team effort. I think that Ms.
17 Vazquez glossed over something with respect to
18 the creative. And I think that that really is
19 something that although Ms. Vazquez shares that
20 with exec and other groups throughout the
21 process, it really starts with her and engaging
22 the new vendor with respect to the creative has
23 really streamlined the process and made it much,
24 much more effective than it had been in the past.

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2 And I don't think that Ms. Lerner would
3 have an issue with me sharing this, so I'm going
4 to share a compliment that we received from
5 Common Cause and Susan Lerner this week. They,
6 the links for all of these various videos were
7 shared across the board with elected officials
8 and good government groups and such. And Ms.
9 Lerner advised me that the content of our videos
10 was so impressive and informative that Common
11 Cause did not feel it had to make any changes to
12 it and shared our material directly with their
13 universe of folks.

14 And that's exactly the way it's supposed
15 to happen. We do our job, we do our job right, we
16 give the information out and others help share
17 that information so that it gets to as wide a net
18 of eligible voters as it possibly can. And so we
19 have our process and we utilize it and then
20 others help supplement it. And to get that
21 compliment from someone who's been around in the
22 elections process as long as Ms. Lerner, I think
23 that was very welcome for me to hear that and
24 gratifying for me to hear that as executive

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2 director. I would imagine it would be the same
3 for the commissioners and I think it speaks
4 volumes to the efforts that were made this go
5 round. And I for one look at that as a down
6 payment on the future, and certainly if we
7 continue on that path, we should expect more such
8 praise in the future.

9 COMMISSIONER TOWNSEND: Mr. Ryan, if I
10 can, just on behalf of the public education
11 committee, I just want to echo what you just said
12 and thank Val and team for all the work that
13 they've done, getting us into early voting and
14 through election day in terms of all the creative
15 that's been put out. I know it's a very small
16 number of people doing incredible amount of work
17 to make sure that we touch as many voters as
18 possible and making sure that they are armed with
19 the information to decide how and when they want
20 to vote and to feel that they can cast their vote
21 with confidence.

22 And I think they've really done a
23 wonderful job of that, particularly the explainer
24 videos that have been all over social media. I

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2 know not everybody is comfortable on Twitter and
3 Facebook and this and that, but for those who
4 are, I think it's been a really wonderful way to
5 directly engage with the voters. And as you said,
6 I think we've seen a lot of really good feedback.
7 And, you know, I look forward, as I think the
8 rest of the committee does in terms of figuring
9 out how we can build upon what has worked in this
10 election cycle for successive cycles. So think
11 there's been a good momentum here that I look
12 forward to keeping up. So thank you Val and to
13 everybody else who helped contribute.

14 MR. RYAN: And thank you for those
15 sentiments. And I think, you know, as somebody
16 who grew up with grayish black fingertips reading
17 newspapers, you know, watching the evolution of
18 the social media, while in some respects has its
19 negative aspects and people get into quarrels
20 that maybe they wouldn't face to face, this is an
21 example of the positive aspects of the digital
22 media universe that we're in, because we can be
23 more targeted to the audience that we like to
24 reach. And then, get the matrix feedback that

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2 these videos that we put out and other
3 information is actually viewed, unlike if
4 somebody bought a newspaper and you know your
5 legal ad is in there, you have no way of knowing
6 if a reader actually read your legal ad or paid
7 attention to it. And so this explanation that Ms.
8 Vazquez gave with respect to the impressions and
9 the matter in which this program was conducted I
10 think is -- well, it is not the future, it's the
11 present and we're happy to have engaged in it the
12 way that we did.

13 So now that we were -- there we go. I
14 lost my agenda there for a second. That concludes
15 the reports on election day. And I'm happy to
16 move on to Item 1B on the agenda, unless anyone
17 has anything else that they'd like to add. Okay,
18 so, Item 1B, we have the hearing date -- we're
19 going to adopt the hearings for the independent
20 nominating petitions for the February 2nd Queens
21 special election in the 24th Council District.
22 Take it away, Mr. Savino, please.

23 MR. SAVINO: Good afternoon,
24 commissioners. As you know, the calendar for this

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2 special election was previously adopted. The only
3 part remaining to be determined was the actual
4 date for the petition hearings. I did check with
5 Queens staff, and their recommendation is
6 December 8th, so they have time to obviously work
7 the objections. So far, we've got a bunch of
8 generals. I haven't seen any specifications just
9 as of yet.

10 COMMISSIONER JOSE ARAUJO: This is
11 Commissioner Araujo. I move that we adopt
12 December 8th at 1:30 for the hearings.

13 SECRETARY FREDERIC UMANE: Second.

14 PRESIDENT TAYLOR: Is there a second?

15 SECRETARY UMANE: Second.

16 PRESIDENT TAYLOR: Thank you,
17 Commissioner Umane.

18 MR. RYAN: Okay. So, we will be
19 certifying this election next week on the first.
20 The boroughs are dutifully moving forward. We
21 have some boroughs that have completed their work
22 and have commenced the audit process and the
23 random draw I believe for Queens has, if not been
24 conducted already is going to be conducted today.

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2 And then we still have a couple more boroughs
3 outstanding. All of that work is in process.
4 There is, we are not concerned about any
5 individual borough's ability to complete the work
6 and we will be ready to certify the election on
7 the 1st.

8 We also have been in communication with
9 the State Board of Elections and will make sure
10 that they have all of the data that they need in
11 order to do their work and to have it done and
12 completed by us in a format that is as user
13 friendly for them as can be in order to complete
14 their work as they have 57 other counties to deal
15 with besides the five counties in New York City.

16 So at this point, I think that thanking
17 the staff is certainly something that I would
18 like to do today, but I'm sure that we will
19 reiterate that again next week. The staff has
20 worked very hard to get us to this point and to
21 be in the position to meet our requirements and
22 to allow the process to be completed here and
23 then by the state, and then ultimately seat the
24 New York State electors so that the next

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2 president of the United States can take office
3 after the Electoral College has completed its
4 work.

5 So, all of that is tremendous,
6 considering the volume of paper that we had for
7 this election. We thought we had a lot of
8 absentee ballots in June, and we raised right
9 past that record for us to over 700,000 absentee
10 ballots. So we'll do that certification next
11 week. That having been said, I would ask for a
12 motion to set the next meeting of the Board of
13 Elections on December 1st at 1:30.

14 SECRETARY UMANE: So moved.

15 MR. RYAN: Is there a second?

16 COMMISSIONER CAMILO: Second.

17 MR. RYAN: Okay. Are there any
18 objections? Hearing none, the motion carries. And
19 now we have one other item on the agenda, which -
20 -

21 SECRETARY UMANE: I move we go into
22 executive session for personnel and potentially
23 litigation.

24 COMMISSIONER ZACCONE: Second.

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2 PRESIDENT TAYLOR: Before we go into
3 executive session, I just wanted to make a report
4 whether or not any other commissioner had any
5 other message to give, and I also want to take
6 the opportunity to just say that we are aware
7 that the Dinkins family will not really be
8 celebrating a great Thanksgiving and we offer our
9 condolences and we'll hold them in our prayers.
10 We have a motion to adjourn to executive session.

11 MR. RYAN: Yes, and so I will take that
12 as a second to Commissioner Umane's motion. Are
13 there any objections? Hearing none, we will go
14 into executive session for personnel. And is
15 there any litigation matters?

16 MR. SAVINO: There's one litigation
17 remaining. I've been told there may be a
18 concession in the future.

19 MR. RYAN: Okay. Alright. So there's
20 nothing to report in, in executive session. Okay.
21 So the next meeting of the Board of Elections
22 will be December 1st at 1:30 and we now are going
23 into executive session. Thank you.

24 (The meeting concluded at 2:04 p.m.)

CERTIFICATE OF ACCURACY

I, Claudia Marques, certify that the foregoing transcript of the Board of Elections in The City of New York on November 24, 2020 was prepared using the required transcription equipment and is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

Certified By



Date: May 17, 2021

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256 West 38th Street - 10th Floor

New York, NY 10018