March 26, 2019

Commissioner Stephen J. Fiala
Charter Revision Commission 2019
250 Broadway, 26th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Commissioner Fiala,

I write to follow up on your inquiry regarding the Citizens Budget Commission’s (CBC) proposal presented at the March 11 Charter Revision Commission Finance Hearing to focus the Borough President capital budget role on identifying needs and providing recommendations.

§ 211 of the Charter sets aside 5 percent of the capital appropriations over which the City has substantial discretion for the five Borough Presidents. In addition, §102-a requires the City’s expense budget dedicate nine-tenths of 1 percent of the cost of Borough Presidents’ capital projects to their maintenance. CBC recommends the Commission eliminate these two sections. Also, § 216 and § 249 refer to the capital budget borough allocation and should be amended. Finally, § 82, which requires Borough Presidents to maintain topographical bureaus to assist with capital projects in the borough, could be amended since such offices may not be necessary absent the capital budget borough allocation.

CBC believes the Charter as written provides sufficient opportunity for the Borough Presidents to identify boroughwide capital budget needs and advise the City Council and Mayor. Specifically:

- § 82 gives Borough Presidents the power to recommend capital projects and requires the Mayor to consult with Borough Presidents in developing capital and expense budget proposals.

- § 85 empowers Borough Presidents to chair their respective Borough Boards—comprised of the borough’s Council Members and Community Board Chairpersons—which submit a statement of capital budget priorities to the Mayor and are empowered to evaluate the progress of capital developments in the borough.
• § 192 provides each Borough President with one appointee on the City Planning Commission.

• § 218 and § 223 grant Borough Presidents the right to review and propose changes to the siting of capital projects in their borough and proposed and final designs, respectively.

We are happy to discuss this proposal and welcome your questions.

Sincerely,

Andrew S. Rein
President