

Where to Find Information on Charter Revision

by Christine Bruzzese

The New York City Charter has undergone many revisions since the major restructuring of city government in 1938. Using the 1989 Charter revision as an example, here are some resources for locating material related to this topic. Please note that Charter Revision Commissions are established by the Mayor under authority granted by state law. Members of the Commission are appointed by the Mayor and personnel generally changes with each Commission formed.

Charter Revision Committee Meeting Minutes. The City Hall Library does not maintain a complete collection of transcripts of all Charter Revision Committee meetings, and public hearings. For 1989, there is a multi-volume work *Submission under Section 5 the Voting Rights Act for Preclearance of Proposed Amendments to the New York City Charter*, which includes meeting minutes, transcripts of public hearings, news articles and related material. For other years, the catalogue and the vertical files can be checked to see what is available.

Preliminary and Final Reports. For 1989 several preliminary and final reports of the Charter Commission were issued. *Summary of Preliminary Proposals* outlined the main proposals that would be presented to voters in November 1989, including abolishment of the Board of Estimate. Further summaries of revised proposals were followed by final reports. The latter provide comprehensive analysis of the

proposals to be placed on the November election ballot for voter consideration.

Other Organizations. Very often, agencies and organizations such as Citizens Union will issue newsletters and reports on the proposed charter revisions or the impact of charter reform. *Charting the Charter* was published by Citizens' Union during the 1989 revision process. It provides summaries of Commission meetings and position papers on key issues by organizations such as Citizens Budget Commission and Women's City Club of New York. *The Impact of the New York City Charter Revision of 1989* was prepared in 1994 by Columbia University, School of International Affairs, Graduate Program in Public Policy and Administration. It examines the effects of changes rendered by the 1989 revision.

Vertical files. The vertical files in the City Hall Library contain news clippings, pamphlets and other items. Newspaper articles discuss the proposed Charter changes, public reaction and the outcome in the November election. The file on Charter Revision dated 1989 contains a handbook from the Charter Revision Commission and a leaflet advising citizens on how they can become involved in the revision process.

Website. The most recent Charter Revision Commission met in 2005. Their website is www.nyc.gov/html/charter. Newsletters, transcripts of meetings, names of Commission members and other information can be found here.