

VALUE DRIVEN

1. Punitive action will not drive legislation or budget decisions. No Council Member's constituents or policy ideas should suffer because of internal politics.

Currently, Council Members are stripped of Committee Chairships, have funding withheld from nonprofits and public works projects, or legislation blocked based on their relationship with the Speaker. If they vote no on the budget, or publicly disagree with the Speaker's position, they face retaliation that not just hurts their career, but the people of their district. As leader of the City Council, the Speaker's top priority should be the well-being of all New Yorkers, and by extension, a functioning and successful body of Council Members. The right leader can govern not through fear of retaliation, but through upholding basic democracy.

COMMITTEES & LEGISLATION

2. Any legislation or resolution that has 26 co-sponsors automatically gets a hearing in the 3-months following the 26th sponsor signing on

Refusing to schedule a hearing is one of the key ways the Speaker of the City Council can block legislation. While not every piece of legislation should need a simple majority of co-sponsors to get a hearing, upholding a simple majority to force a hearing will help democracy and not bureaucracy rule the City Council.

3. Any legislation or resolution that has 34 co-sponsors automatically goes to a vote

Similar to position #2, even after a hearing, the City Council Speaker can still prevent legislation from being brought to the floor to a vote - even if the bill is likely to pass. A super-majority sets a slightly higher bar, but will still strip the Speaker of the singular power to determine what is voted on.

4. Councilmembers may petition for the formation, merging, or dissolution of a committee

The Committees of the City Council allow legislation to be sorted into the appropriate category and incorporated into hearings on comprehensive topics. One of the ways the Speaker has historically retaliated against a Council Member is by abolishing their committee (ex: this is why the Council no longer has a Resiliency and Waterfronts Committee. It was absorbed into the Environmental Protection Committee due to retaliation against its Chair). Committees that focus on the imminent threats of environmental disaster, that coalesce the conditions facing tenants and homeowners, are essential in order for the Council to fulfill its fundamental goal of protecting New Yorkers.

5. Hearing topics and scheduling will have independent control of their committees

The Council Members who chair committees will be selected based on their level of interest and expertise with the topic. If they are trusted to lead the Committee, they should be given the freedom to determine the Committee's agenda, except in cases where bills in their committee have majority or super majority support. The Speaker should not be able to override the Committee Chair without due cause. Currently, members of the Committee have little to no role in setting the agenda.

6. Reform the bill drafting process

The Bill Drafting Unit is a team of policy analysts and lawyers who draft the language for legislative ideas that Council Members submit. It should operate as an independent unit, focusing on legally-sound language, and not subject to the political opinions of the Speaker. When Council Members submit their ideas for legislation to the Bill Drafting Unit, they are supposed to receive a drafted bill within 60 days of the request - but this rule is often violated. The lack of transparency for Council Members and the understaffing of this division prolongs the drafting, and therefore the implementation, of legislation that can be crucial to improving the lives of New Yorkers. Additionally, Council Members should be able to request amended language to introduced legislation during any point in the legislative process.

7. Reform the 'First in time' Rule

When two Council Members submit the same idea to the Bill Drafting Unit, the Council Member who submitted the idea first gets 'dibs' on the bill. The Council Member who isn't first in time is not allowed to know who is. This process can be used by the Speaker and their allies to block legislation, claiming - truthfully or not - that another Council Member is first in time, even if they have no intention of ever introducing the bill. Reform of this broken system would mean that from when the idea is submitted, Council Members have 3 months from when it is drafted to introduce the bill, otherwise it will go to the next Council Member.

8. Improve Accessibility of City Council Hearings for the Public and Council Members

To increase participation and transparency, City Council hearings should be able to meet people where they are at. When there's a NYCHA oversight hearing, it should be in a NYCHA community room. When there's a land use hearing on a high-profile application, the hearing should take place in the impacted community. At the same time, as the City Council as a body grows more diverse, more accommodations are needed. The clearest example is that childcare is currently not a valid excuse for Council Members joining hearings or State meetings remotely. Hearings can often run late and Council Members who are parents, especially of young children, shouldn't have to choose between taking care of their children and representing their constituents.

BUDGET

9. The Budget Negotiation Team will include up to four seats voted on by fellow councilmembers to add accountability and trust throughout the budget process

The Budget Negotiation Team is currently made up of 16 Council Members who are selected by the Speaker. This team is in charge of liaising with the Mayor's office and making decisions on big ticket priorities and cuts. Four of these seats should be filled by allowing other Council Members to nominate each other and vote on who should be on this team. This will add greater accountability for the BNT to listen to the overall body of the City Council, instead of making decisions in isolation behind closed doors.

10. One of each delegation co-chairs will be added to the Budget and Negotiation team

While each borough has a delegation comprised of the relevant Council Members who then elect co-chairs, the positions hold limited influence. To ensure cross-borough equality, at least one co-chair from each borough should be on the City Council's Budget Negotiation team.

11. Double the amount of council member's discretionary and capital allocations

After the Council Member has allocated the funding earmarked for their district, they are then able to submit a list of organizations or public works projects that they would like funded to the Speaker's office. This results in a large amount of the budget getting allocated to district-specific projects by a Council Member who does not represent that district. Doubling the amount of Council Member's allocations puts the power where it belongs - in the hands of the elected official for that area - and removes the arbitrariness of the "Speaker's List" which can also be withheld as a form of retaliation.

12. Commit AT LEAST 1% of the NYC Budget to the Parks Department

New York City spends less of its budget on parks compared to every other major city in the U.S. We have only one gardener for every 114 acres, a barebones workforce, and every day Council Members hear concerns from residents about garbage overflow, rat dens, and outstanding repairs. Allocating at least 1% of the budget to parks won't just beautify our most heavily used public spaces, but will also expand offerings of our rec centers, create well-paying jobs that result in higher retention, and return quality and dignity to our open spaces.

13. Increase funding allocations for CASA and Su-CASA programming

Cultural arts programs in our schools (called CASA programs in the city budget) are essential to both the intellectual growth and the emotional well-being of our city's students. With federal budget cuts decimating the arts, we must ensure that these programs aren't just available to students who's families can pay for them. SU-CASA programs serve older adults and help break down the isolation that many of our aging population faces. Immigrant communities particularly benefit from these programs that are culturally-tailored, allowing participants to learn new crafts, get active and dance, and enrich their lives.

LAND USE

14. Support member-deference

When New Yorkers elect somebody to make land use decisions, they expect that person to be negotiating on their behalf - not the 50 other members of the City Council. Member deference is an unspoken rule where Council Members defer to the opinion of the local Council Member when voting on a local land use matter. If a Council Member in Staten Island was going to vote no on a casino, then it's understood that other Council Members wouldn't collude to override their vote. Naturally, the real estate industry hates member deference. If a Council Member is refusing to be swayed by their lobbying, developers are incentivized to offer more affordable housing and more public benefits. Without member deference, the real estate industry has no reason to negotiate and can easily undermine the local Council Member and therefore the communities they are looking to profit off of.

15. Create a working group to improve Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH)

Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) is the only citywide program that mandates affordable housing and has produced thousands of new affordable units. However, MIH has failed to make headway in our city's affordability crisis. The program has disproportionately built market-rate units in low-income neighborhoods, and the affordable units that are listed are often still too expensive for the average incomes of these areas. Since being enacted almost ten years ago, MIH has never been modified. The Speaker should convene a working group to reform MIH to meet the dire affordable housing crisis facing New Yorkers.

16. Organize the land use division to meet the needs of council members

The City Council has an in-house land use team that is meant to support Council Members who don't have on-staff urban planners. While this team can be a great resource and conduct member-wide briefings, the Speaker should allow this division to work more closely on Member-driven initiatives like community-based rezonings or new affordable housing. Instead of serving as a reactive resource, Council Members should be able to use the Land Use Division to help pass community-based plans and build new affordable housing. Council Members should also be able to request hiring a Land Use Director for their own offices that does not impact their overall staffing budget (which is already limited).

PERSONNEL & RESOURCES

17. Support the council union (ALE) and contract negotiations in good faith

The tension between the Council staff union and the Speaker's office is one of many hypocrisies in our city's bureaucracy. While the Council is often supportive of union-backed legislation, its handling of its own union mimics the tactics of bad bosses across the city. We cannot allow Council staff, who are often on the frontlines fighting off the inequities faced by New Yorkers, continue to scrape by on low wages. Pay disparities are rampant, and overtime is expected. The Speaker should be setting an example for the

rest of the city to follow because if we can't support our own union, how can we legislate for any other industry to support theirs.

18. Fund caucuses to have the staff they require to function

City Council Members will join and form certain caucuses to focus specifically on empowering specific communities and fighting for certain priorities. However the operational work of running a caucus, organizing meetings, strategizing how to achieve its goals, are often left to one staffer, and if they're lucky, an intern.

19. Train new hires and existing staff to support skill-building, career advancement, and excellent performance

When a Council office hires a new employee, there is no training offered by the Council that teaches them how to perform the duties of a community liaison, legislative director, or budget director. This means every City Council Member's office is largely dependent on the experience of more veteran staff, which can be inconsistent. To best serve New Yorkers, the Speaker should ensure the staff of every office is set up for success.

20. Develop a council-wide digital agency contact list

Knowing the right person to contact at a City agency is crucial to solving a constituent case or community issue. Currently, these contacts are shared through informal group chats between staffers - and sometimes nobody has the answer. The Speaker's office should take the lead in coordinating with agency Commissioners, ensuring intergovernmental and liaison contacts are an open resource to all City Council offices.

21. Provide 72-hour notice on agendas for democratic conference and committees

Another way the Speaker can suppress dissent in the Council and from the public is by waiting to reveal the topics of closed-door meetings, and sometimes even committees, until the last minute. During Democratic Conference, when all the Democratic Council Members privately meet to discuss upcoming hearings and votes, last-minute agendas make it impossible for Council Members to do their own research before discussion and fully reliant on what is presented by the Speaker's staff - which can be biased. For committees, it makes it difficult for advocates to mobilize and have their voices heard. Advance notice allows for greater democracy, more informed decision, and more public participation.

22. Increase office operating budgets and staff salaries

Each Council Member is given a lump sum of money that is divided between office salaries and office operations based on their own discretion. Thanks to the efforts of the ALE union, the base salary for a

City Council staffer has been raised to approximately \$58,000. However the office operating budget was not increased. This pits decent salaries for staff against needs like replacing broken computers and aging technology, cleaning supplies or cleaning companies, or even basics like printer paper. Having a fully staffed office with a team that speaks the languages of the district, has the expertise in land use or legislation, and makes enough money to pay rent and support their families, should be a bare minimum.

23. Provide translation services

While each Council office should make a sincere effort to hire multi-lingual staff depending on their district's needs, the Speaker's office should provide supplemental assistance. These don't have to be full-time positions, but existing translation hotlines are often low-quality and lack the technical language to communicate accurately to constituents. Language barriers shouldn't be the reason New Yorkers find themselves homeless or without access to programs everyone else benefits from.

24. Require walk-in hours for each council member's district office to incentivize accessibility and transparency

Council Member Marte's district office is open to walk-in cases and meetings 10am - 6pm, Monday - Friday. While not all Council Members may want to run their offices this way, the Speaker should provide leadership in ensuring New Yorkers' most local elected officials are accessible as possible.

PRESS & PUBLICATIONS

25. Develop a Council-wide press list

Local media is struggling. That means turnover is high, new and old outlets start and stop, and getting press coverage to inform constituents about local projects or new legislation is becoming increasingly difficult. The Speaker's office should maintain an updated press list that's accessible to all Council communications staff so that New Yorkers can be more informed about local government.

26. Provide access to subscription-based outlets and publications

Council Members and their staff must have access to the same subscription services that are already provided and discounted for certain central staff in the City Council. Relevant trade publications and legal databases will ensure Council Members and their teams have access to the types of quality information they need to do their jobs best.