

NYC Charter Ballot Questions: November 3, 2026

Five questions from the Commission on Government Efficiency. [Ballot wording \(Appendix A\)](#) and [amendment text \(Appendix C\)](#): nyc.gov/site/charter/index.page

summary by Bill Bruno

Question 1: Permits to use public space

Ballot: Speeds up permits for cafés, ramps, planters and similar uses.

What it does: A revocable consent lets someone use a sidewalk or street for a private purpose. The city can end it at any time. Most now require a public hearing. Sidewalk cafés follow a longer process of their own, with a community board vote and possible Council review. Q1 puts all of them under one process. The hearing becomes optional. The community board, council member and borough president get at least 15 days' notice and 15 days to comment.

Note: The ballot mentions sidewalk cafés, but the change covers every revocable consent. Only the Council's power to review sidewalk cafés ends outright.

Question 2: City contracts

Ballot: Cuts paperwork for contractors and requires the Procurement Policy Board to meet quarterly.

What it does: The Procurement Policy Board (three mayoral and two comptroller appointees) writes the city's buying. It would meet at least quarterly. It could vary the vendor questionnaire by contract size, industry or business size, so a hot dog vendor and a large bank no longer answer the same questions. It could also set the dollar level (now \$100,000) above which the public may comment on contracts not won by competitive bid. The mayor could let agency contracting officers approve some of these contracts over \$5 million, with the agency head's approval.

Note: The text sets no ceiling on the comment threshold. But the Charter still bars exempting any contract over \$10 million, so that is evidently the limit.

Question 3: Street safety, city property, office leases

Ballot: Three unrelated changes in one question.

Street safety. Department of Transportation (DOT) must now consult the police, fire and small business services departments and the disability office on major projects such as bike lanes. A recent law also made the Fire Department confer with local firehouses. Q3 requires only that a consulted agency confer with its own head, who will then decide what sub-units of his department to consult. It also says a failure to consult does not invalidate a project, which appears aimed at the 31st Street bike lane ruling. The DOT commissioner could start work at once, without advance notice, when there is a risk of significant injury. Existing law already allowed that. Q3 adds a trigger and requires best efforts to notify afterward.

City property. Lots of 10,000 square feet or less (not landmarks) and air rights from city-owned landmarks would move to faster review: about 90 days, with community board and borough president review and a City Planning Commission decision, but no Council vote. The city could also sell undevelopable lots to neighbors without an auction. An extra hearing after a two-year delay between approval and sale is dropped.

Office space. The City Planning Commission hearing and the Council's two-thirds veto end. The Citywide Administrative Services commissioner decides, gives the community board, council member and borough president notice beforehand, and files with the Comptroller and Council afterward. No hearing is required.

Note: The ballot does not mention no-auction sales, and the office rules cover purchases as well as leases.

Question 4: Building permits

Ballot: Creates a permit hub, moves waterfront permits to Buildings, and lets more Buildings officials approve.

What it does: The Department of Buildings must build one system for permit applications by December 1, 2029, or later if it finds that not feasible and funding allows. Environmental Protection, Fire, Transportation and other agencies must accept applications through it but keep their own review powers. Any deputy commissioner who is an architect or engineer could approve plans, certificates of occupancy and zoning-lot subdivisions. Borough superintendents become borough commissioners, with powers in one borough or citywide. Buildings also takes over waterfront construction permits from Small Business Services by December 31, 2030, or sooner if a waterfront code takes effect.

Note: The hub is one door, not one reviewer. Other agencies still decide.

Question 5: Rainy day fund

Ballot: Sets a savings target and requires a formula for deposits.

What it does: Combined reserves would have a target of at least 12% of last year's tax revenue. These count the Revenue Stabilization Fund plus other city reserve funds the formula names. The Office of Management and Budget, with the Comptroller, must publish the deposit formula by May 1, 2027, after 30 days' notice and a public hearing. It must update the formula at least every four years. Deposits follow the formula and remain subject to the city budget. No more than half the fund may be withdrawn in a year unless the mayor certifies a compelling fiscal need, such as a recession, a revenue drop or a disaster.

Note: The formula may call for no deposit at all. Civic groups say the 50% limit already exists in state law.

Who says what: Citizens Union backs all five. The Citizens Budget Commission backs 1, 3 and 4 and opposes 5 as too weak.

For further viewpoints, the reader is encouraged to check out these links

League of Women Voters

<https://lwvnyc.org/proposals-2026/>

Citizens Union

<https://citizensunion.org/document/2026-10-01/citizens-union-announces-support-for-all-five-2026-ballot-questions/>

Citizens Budget Commission

<https://cbcny.org/research/vote-yes-ballot-questions-1-3-and-4-vote-no-ballot-question-5>
