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BOARD OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS FOR THE CITY OF CHICAGO AS A DULY CONSTITUTED ELECTORAL BOARD

Objections of: Julia Zaeske	)	
	)	
	)	
To the Nomination	)	No.: 26-EB-SBD-012
Papers of: Norma Rios Sierra	)	
	)	Rel. 26-EB-SBD-007
Candidate for the office of	)	
Member of the Chicago Board of Education,	)	
Subdistrict 3A, City of Chicago	)	

FINDINGS AND DECISION

The duly constituted Electoral Board, consisting of the Board of the Election Commissioners for the City of Chicago, Commissioners Marisel A. Hernandez, June A. Brown and Laura Kotelman, organized by law in response to a Call issued by Marisel A. Hernandez, Chair of said Electoral Board, for the purpose of hearing and passing upon objections ("Objections") of Julia Zaeske ("Objector") to the nomination papers ("Nomination Papers") of Norma Rios Sierra, candidate for the office of Member of the Chicago Board of Education, Subdistrict 3A in the City of Chicago ("Candidate") at the General Election to be held on Tuesday, November 3, 2026, having convened on Tuesday, June 9, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 800, 69 West Washington Street, Chicago Illinois, and having heard and determined the Objections to the Nomination Papers in the above-entitled matter, finds that:

1. Objections to the Nomination Papers of the Candidate were duly and timely filed.

2. The Electoral Board was constituted according to the laws of the State of Illinois.

3. A Call to the hearing on said Objections was duly issued by the Chair of the Electoral Board and served upon the members of the Electoral Board, the Objector and the

Candidate, by registered or certified mail and by Sheriff's service, as provided by statute or statutory service was waived and service by email was authorized.

4. A public hearing held on these Objections commenced on Wednesday, June 10, 2026 and was continued from time to time. The Electoral Board assigned this matter to Hearing Officer Terence Flynn for further hearings and proceedings.

5. The Objector and the Candidate were directed by the Electoral Board's Call served upon them to appear before the Hearing Officer on the date and at the time designated in the Hearing Schedule. Appearances were filed by or on behalf of the following persons: the Objector, Julia Zaeske, by Attorney MICHAEL J KASPER; and the Candidate, Norma Rios Sierra, by Attorney ED MULLEN.

6. The Hearing Officer ordered that an examination of the voter registration records be conducted by clerks and agents under the Board's direction and supervision, in accordance with the laws of Illinois and the rules of the Board.

7. The Hearing Officer directed all parties to appear and be present, either personally and/or by their authorized representatives during this records examination.

8. The Candidate and/or the Candidate's duly authorized representative was present during the examination of the registration records or waived their right to do so. The Objector and/or the Objector's duly authorized representative was present during the examination of the registration records or waived their right to do so.

9. The examination of the registration records was completed and the Electoral Board hereby adopts and incorporates by reference the results of the records examination conducted by its clerks and agents. The written report of the result of the registration records examination is contained in the Board's file and a copy was made available to the parties.

10. The results of the records examination indicate that:

A. The minimum number of valid signatures required by law for placement on the ballot for the office in question is 500.

B. The number of purportedly valid signatures appearing on the nominating petition filed by the Candidate total 1,500.

C. The number of signatures deemed invalid because of objections sustained as a result of the records examination total 560.

D. The remaining number of signatures deemed valid as a result of the records examination total 940.

11. The Electoral Board finds that the number of valid signatures appearing on the Candidate's nominating petition following completion of the records examination exceeds by 440 the minimum number of valid signatures required by law to be placed upon the ballot as a candidate for Member of the Chicago Board of Education, Subdistrict 3A, City of Chicago.

12. If requested by a party pursuant to Rule 8, the Hearing Officer conducted a hearing to allow the party an opportunity to present evidence in support of its Rule 8 motion objecting to the Board's clerk's findings during the records examination.

13. The Hearing Officer has tendered to the Electoral Board a report and recommended decision. Based upon the evidence presented, the Hearing Officer found that the Candidate's Nomination Papers contained 940 valid signatures, which exceeds the minimum number of valid signatures required by law to be placed upon the ballot as a candidate for the office of Member of the Chicago Board of Education, Subdistrict 3A, City of Chicago, and that the Candidate's Nomination Papers should be found valid.

14. The Electoral Board, having considered the evidence and arguments tendered by the parties and the Hearing Officer's report of recommended findings and conclusions of law, hereby adopts the Hearing Officer's recommended findings and conclusions of law and incorporates them herein. A copy of the Hearing Officer Report and Recommendations is attached hereto and is incorporated herein as part of the decision of the Electoral Board.

15. For the reasons stated above, the Electoral Board finds that the Candidate has a sufficient number of valid signatures on her nominating petitions and that the Nomination Papers. However, a final resolution of the Candidate's right to ballot access remains pending the final decision in related case 26-EB-SBD-007.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that the Objections of Julia Zaeske to the Nomination Papers of Norma Rios Sierra, candidate for the office of Member of the Chicago Board of Education, Subdistrict 3A, City of Chicago are hereby OVERRULED and dismissed, but the final resolution of the Candidate's right to ballot access remains pending the final decision in related case 26-EB-SBD-007.

Dated: Chicago, Illinois, Tuesday, July 28, 2026.

Marisel A. Hernandez, Chair

June A. Brown, Commissioner

Laura Kotelman, Commissioner

NOTICE: Pursuant to Section 10-10.1 of the Election Code (10 ILCS 5/10-10.1) a party aggrieved by this decision and seeking judicial review of this decision must file a petition for judicial review with the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County within 5 days after service of the decision of the Electoral Board.

BEFORE THE DULY CONSTITUTED ELECTORAL BOARD

Julia Zaeske,	)	
Petitioner-Objector	)	
v.	)	**26-EB-SBD-012**
Norma Rios Sierra,	)	
Respondent-Candidate	)	

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Summary of Recommendation:

Given that the Rule 6 final results showed the Candidate with 440 signatures above the minimum signature requirement and Objector did not file a Rule 8 request and that the dual circulator objection embodied in ¶ 9 of Objector's Petition has been overruled by the Board, the recommendation is that the Candidate's name should be on the ballot. The only caveat is that Candidate retains a "defensive" Rule 8 that would only be litigated if the Board's ruling on the dual circulator issue were reversed. However, given the number of signatures involved, and the time involved and contingent nature of such a hearing now, judicial economy more than suggests that the recommendation now should be in favor of the Candidate.

Procedural Background:

This matter was assigned to the undersigned Hearing Officer and the initial status was held on June 10, 2026. Appearing for the Objector was Michael Kasper and appearing for the Candidate was Ed Mullen.

Only ¶ 9 of the Objection contained a legal issue, the dual circulator matter handled in consolidated fashion by the Board. The remaining issues of the Objection were all susceptible to

a Rule 6 examination and thus a Rule 6 directive was executed. An interim status was held on June 17th.

Also on June 17th, Objector filed her Subpoena Request, all relating to the ¶ 9 dual circulator issue. That Request was recommended to be stayed by this Hearing Officer on June 22nd, essentially for three reasons: potential mootness depending on the Board's eventual ruling on the consolidated dual circulator issue, burden-shifting given that ruling and whether the exercise, if we got that far, would be result-determinative.

Also on June 22nd, the Rule 6 exam final results were available and showed Candidate 440 signatures above the minimum signature requirement. As of June 23rd (and until July 8th), the Record in this matter did not show that a timely Rule 8 motion was filed by either party.[1] Of course, on July 1, the Board entered Notice of Preliminary Decision overruling the dual circulator objection and subsequently dismissed the Subpoena Request as moot. However, Objector's ¶9 contested over 80 sheets of Candidate's Nomination papers, thus provoking the arithmetic possibility that the 440-signature margin could be overcome if the Board's consolidated ruling were subsequently overturned.

Any Evidentiary Hearing Now Would be Contingent Only.

Given the numbers of signatures and Nomination Petition sheets involved, any hearing would be lengthy and would likely involve issuing subpoenas already first stayed and then denied as moot. Further, a resolution now on the numbers in favor of the Objector would be contingent only, until such time as there was a final court ruling on the dual-circulator issue. Quite simply, it would be a waste of attorney, hearing officer and Board time and resources. "Judicial economy" requires us to wait until the (I believe unlikely) event of a final court ruling reversing the Board on the dual-circulator issue. The parties agree to this procedure.

[1] At the July 8 status hearing, I informed counsel of the lack of any Rule 8 motion in the file. At a subsequent telephone conference on July 10th, Candidate's counsel requested leave to file her Rule 8 motion that had been timely filed but mis-filed into the wrong matter. Counsel for Objector had no objection, leave was granted and Candidate's Rule 8 motion was filed into the correct matter on July 10th.

Therefore,

For all the reasons stated above, it is the recommendation of the undersigned Hearing Officer that the Objector's Petition should be overruled and the Objection should be dismissed and (given the same contemporaneously filed recommendation in 26-EB-SBD-007), the name "Norma Rios Sierra" should appear on the ballot in the November 3, 2026 election for the office of School Board Member (3A), City of Chicago, State of Illinois.

Terence Flynn
Hearing Officer
Dated: July 14, 2026

s/ Terence Flynn