

Four Freedoms Democratic Club
October General Membership Meeting
October 21, 2019
The Church of the Holy Trinity, Draesel Hall
7:00-9:00pm

Minutes

1. Welcome (2 minutes)
 - a. President Frank Wilkinson called the meeting to order

2. Guest Speaker: Bella Wang (25 minutes)
 - a. Bella Wang of the League of Women Voters gave a presentation on the questions concerning the City Charter that will appear on the ballot at the upcoming election on November 5th
 - i. The City Council passed a local law to create a Charter Revision Commission, which had a broad mandate to consider reforms
 - ii. The Commission's work ultimately produced 5 questions, the full text of which is available [here](#)
 - b. Summary of the questions:
 - i. Item 1: Ranked Choice Voting
 1. Voters will be able to rank up to 5 candidates in order of preference
 - a. If no candidate wins a majority on the first ballot, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and his/her voters' second choice votes are now counted, with the process repeated until a candidate receives a majority of the votes
 2. RCV will only apply to local (i.e., City) primaries
 - ii. Item 2: Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB)
 1. Includes a variety of relatively small tweaks to increase the CCRB's oversight of the NYPD
 - iii. Item 3: Ethics in Government
 1. Includes a number of reforms aimed at good government and reducing conflicts of interest in City proceedings
 - iv. Item 4: City Budget
 1. This proposal establishes a rainy day fund, but would require state legislative action to go into effect
 - v. Item 5: Land Use
 1. Aimed at improving transparency and oversight over land use
 - c. The League of Women Voters supports all 5 questions, and urges everyone to vote "Yes" on all 5

- i. While the proposals are all fairly modest in scope, and should have gone much further, they are nonetheless a good start
 - d. Ms. Wang invited all interested members to get involved in LWV, which tackles such important issues as voter registration, early voting, census participation, criminal justice reform, and more
- 3. Guest Speaker: Council Member Carlina Rivera (25 minutes)
 - a. Council Member Carlina Rivera, for the 2nd District, who currently serves as the Chair of the Hospitals Committee, spoke to the Club about her legislative agenda, including the following issues:
 - i. Ensuring full participating in the 2020 census, including from communities that historically have been at risk of undercounts
 - ii. Increasing oversight over non-vital construction in off-hours
 - iii. Marijuana legalization, including ensuring that all communities (not just large corporations) can participate in the new business opportunities this creates
 - iv. Preventing drug testing of pregnant mothers without full informed consent about the potential consequences
 - v. Addressing the four basic needs of all New Yorkers – housing, education, food, and health care
 - b. Member Q&A:
 - i. Fred Newton asked about drug testing of pregnant mothers, and whether we know the percent of positive tests, and any attempts to distinguish between marijuana vs. harder drugs
 - 1. CM Rivera responded that, while she does not know the exact percentage of positive tests, we do know that mothers are far more likely to be tested without informed consent when they are POCs and/or indigent
 - ii. Pierre Ratzki asked whether there are any measures that would improve transparency at hospitals regarding billing, especially when coding can make a huge difference in the price of procedures
 - 1. CM Rivera spoke about the ongoing implement of the Epic electronic billing system at all NYC hospitals, which will help with billing clarity
 - iii. Kim Moscaritolo asked about the East River Park resiliency project, which is aimed at protecting the adjacent land from storm surges, the effects of climate change & rising water levels, and other environmental risks
 - 1. CM Rivera said that the project timeline is roughly 5 years, and that 50% of the park should be open at any given time
 - 2. Timeline = about 5 years

- iv. Jerry Ferguson asked about cracking down on off-hours construction projects
 - 1. CM Rivera said that these projects are too often rubber-stamped without regard for the effect on surrounding residents, and that she intends to address the problem
4. Resolution on Foundation Aid (10 minutes)
- a. Amy Schwartz, co-chair (with Debra Freeman) of the Education Working Group, presented a [resolution](#) on Foundation Aid
 - i. Through litigation that has been ongoing since the 1990s, student advocacy groups have secured court orders requiring the state to live up to its obligation to provide a sound basic education to all students
 - 1. This includes increased funding, called “Foundation Aid,” which the state has never fully disbursed
 - b. The resolution calls for full, expeditious disbursement of the Aid, with interest
 - i. After a discussion, the vote was called, and the Club unanimously adopted the resolution
5. Presidential Endorsement (10 minutes)
- a. The Club held a discussion over whether we should make an endorsement in the 2020 Democratic Presidential primary
 - i. Note – NY primary is April 28, 2020
 - b. Member discussion:
 - i. Members spoke in favor of holding a vote, noting that the number of candidates will whittle at the campaign goes on, and thus a consensus may emerge
 - 1. Others noted that we would not be petitioning for the candidates – who have their own ballot access operations – and thus members would not have to campaign for candidates whom they do not support
 - ii. Members spoke against holding a vote, arguing it could be too divisive, would have little practical effect, and that the Club should focus on local politics
 - iii. Alex Bores proposed that, if we *do* hold an endorsement vote, we should wait until February or March, which would be after the early primary states but before the New York primary on April 28, 2020
 - c. Kim put a motion on the floor to hold a Presidential primary endorsement vote sometime early in the next year
 - i. The resolution was adopted by near-unanimous approval, with one vote opposed

6. District Leader & State Committee Updates (15 min)
 - a. Kim & Ben gave an update on District Leader activities
 - i. County Committee
 1. The recent County Committee Meeting was boisterous, chaotic, and ill-run, with a lack of transparency and possible efforts to skirt the rules in order to avoid fair votes on officer elections
 2. Recognizing the need for changes, Kim & Ben are making efforts to partner with other District Leaders to form a reform caucus within the Executive Committee, and will keep the Club apprised of its efforts
 - ii. Small business Saturday
 1. Yorkville Buy Local is holding a walking tour of local businesses on the Saturday after Thanksgiving
 - a. Businesses will give out samples and tell visitors about their history in the community
 - b. Members were encouraged to let Kim & Ben know of any local businesses that might want to participate
 - iii. Early voting
 1. This is the first year New York City has permitted early voting, and voters can go [here](#) to find their poll site
 - iv. Civil court vacancy
 1. The 6th Municipal Court District has a vacancy; Kim & Ben are working to organize a panel to interview all the candidates
 - b. State Committee Members Lauren Trapanotto & Adam Roberts gave an update on the State Committee's work
 - i. The SC met last week, and confirmed the details for the 2020 Presidential primary, to be held on April 28, 2020
 1. The deadline to switch registration is now February 14th
 - ii. The SC also held a contested election for a New York DNC member seat
 1. Generally, these elections are uncontested and leadership simply installs their choice
 2. This time, candidates announced their candidacies and provided bios ahead of time, and the SC members held an actual vote
 3. The improved process was thanks to the reforms that Lauren & Adam helped passed, as well as the new leadership of Chair Jay Jacobs
 - iii. Emilia Decaudin, first openly trans member of State Committee, presented a resolution permitting non-binary persons to run on either line for seats that

divide the race between male and female candidates, which the SC adopted near unanimously

1. The resolution will still require legislative action

7. Committee & Working Group Updates (15 min)

- a. Protect the Rule of Law Working Group (Jerry Ferguson)
 - i. The group has been participating in national coalition that aims to rapidly organize protests in response to the President's unlawful actions
 1. The group plans to organize protests during the impeachment proceedings, and on the eve of the vote
 - ii. The next meeting will be held on October 30, at Jerry and Teresa's home
- b. Transportation Working Group (Nancy Lang)
 - i. The group plans to look into Andy Byford's resignation, as well as ADA compliance for the 90th Street ferry stop

8. Member Time/Club Announcements (10 min)

- a. Frank reminded members that the Club is holding its low dollar fundraiser tomorrow night, October 22
 - i. Dorrian's Red Hand, 7-9pm; \$20 entrance fee, or \$35 with dues payment
- b. Brian Mangan of the Chelsea Reform Democratic Club invited members who are interested to reach out to him about Upper East Side canvassing opportunities in support of Bernie Sanders's candidacy
- c. Adam Roberts invited members to a forum at the Center for Architecture in Greenwich Village on November 11 on voting issues, which Council Member Ben Kallos will be attending

9. Adjourn