

Four Freedoms Democratic Club  
November General Membership Meeting  
November 18, 2019  
The Church of the Holy Trinity, Draesel Hall  
7:00-9:00pm

## Minutes

1. Welcome (10 minutes)
  - a. President Frank Wilkinson called the meeting to order
  - b. Vice President Jerry Ferguson introduced the Club to the new members present, and spoke about the Club's work as well as its outreach to the Youth Board
  
2. Youth Board Presentation on the Need for Educational Equity (35 minutes)
  - a. Members of the Youth Board gave a presentation on inequity in education in New York, and needed changes to ensure that every student receives the education they deserve
    - i. Sadly, NYC has the most segregated school system in the entire country, which has effects on student performance
      1. Studies show that diversity improves outcomes, while all students tend to perform worse in segregated schools (even, e.g., a 99% white school)
    - ii. Funding matters, and the state has still failed to distribute court-ordered funds to all schools
    - iii. The YB therefore called on the state to adequately fund all schools, and address diversity & equity issues across the board
  - b. The full presentation packet can be found [here](#)
  
3. Nominations for 2020 Club Leadership (10 minutes)
  - a. Corresponding Secretary:
    - i. Alex Bores
  - b. Recording Secretary:
    - i. Pierre Ratzki
  - c. Treasurer:
    - i. John Bartos
  - d. Vice President:
    - i. Frank Wilkinson
  - e. President:
    - i. Jerry Ferguson
  - f. Members-at-Large:
    - i. Esther Yang

- ii. Jeremy Berman
- iii. Arlene Kayatt
- iv. John Wagner
- v. Flor de Maria Ellets
- vi. Marina Phillips
- vii. Ruth Halberg
- viii. Matt Lombardi
- ix. Jason Bohner
- x. Ilyssa Fuchs (declined)
- xi. Lee Wiggins (declined)
- xii. Teresa Malyshev (declined)

4. Update on County Committee Rules Reform Efforts (10 minutes)

- a. Pierre gave a presentation on the latest activities of the County Committee Rules Committee, which is tasked with considering and recommending changes to the party rules
  - i. We made efforts to get the RC to consider proposed changes *before* the last CC meeting; however, after much delay and back-and-forth, the RC refused to meet until *after* the CC meeting
- b. The RC met on November 12th and debated several rules changes, including the following:
  - i. Adding a parliamentarian to the CC
    - 1. Members of the RC pushed back on the proposal to make this an elected position, but agreed with the compromise that the parliamentarian should be nominated by the Chair and confirmed by the Executive Committee (which is made up of the District Leaders)
  - ii. Allowing a contested vote to be counted by standing division, in addition to a roll call or voice vote
  - iii. Documenting all meetings of the CC and the Executive Committee via video, which will be available to all
  - iv. Allowing candidates for elected CC officer positions to submit bios and statements of candidacy, which the CC will then post online ahead
- c. The RC also debated holding annual (instead of only biennial) meetings
  - i. The consensus was to hold a non-official meeting in the summer of 2020, which will be a great opportunity to promote election-related activism

5. District Leader Updates (5 minutes)

- a. District Leader Ben Wetzler gave an update on the Fair Elections Campaign, which is holding a phone-a-thon tomorrow

- i. The campaign is asking people to pick a 15 minute slot to call Assembly Leader Carl Heastie and Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins
      - 1. The goal is to ensure that the legislature only adopts truly robust campaign finance reforms, regardless of what Governor Cuomo’s Commission recommends
    - b. The community is hosting a “Small Business Saturday” walking tour of local businesses on Saturday, November 30th, from 11am to 2pm
- 6. Conversation with City Councilmember Ben Kallos (30 minutes)
  - a. City Councilmember Ben Kallos gave a presentation on his legislative agenda for the coming year:
    - i. Open supportive housing in the neighborhood
    - ii. Bar discrimination for tenants who go to housing court
    - iii. Veterans issues
    - iv. Automatic benefits
      - 1. I.e., distribute government benefits to those eligible *automatically*, rather than require them to apply
    - v. Retirement plans
      - 1. The City should offer everyone in the city (who doesn’t already have such a plan through their employer) low-fee retirement accounts
    - vi. Broadband internet access
      - 1. Spectrum Internet Assist provides low cost broadband internet for families that are eligible for free or reduced school lunch, or senior on supplemental social security
  - b. Member Q&A:
    - i. Is the city considering a form of rent control for businesses?
      - 1. Yes, and CM Kallos has co-sponsored the Small Business Jobs Survival ACT, which would tackle the problem of empty stores and skyrocketing rent
    - ii. Can we implement a system to fill out tax forms automatically?
      - 1. This would have to be done at the state level, as NYC does not have its own tax form
    - iii. What is your position on restricting the height of residential buildings?
      - 1. We need clarity about zoning rules, as they are currently vague and easily manipulated by developers
        - a. E.g., we have 28 story buildings that are the height of 40 story ones, because of floors that contain no housing units but have very high ceilings (“the void”)

- b. We need to balance building new housing with ensuring that buildings are efficient in their spacing, do not block sunlight, and are not only built for the rich
- iv. How can we make the New York Democratic Party more democratic?
  - 1. CM Kallos is interested in hearing from reform groups, but a lot of the change needs to happen at the state legislative level

7. Committee Reports & Member Time (10 min)

- a. Amy Schwartz:
  - i. The Education Working Group will be present at a public hearing on December 3, at 10am, addressing the continued fight for the court-ordered Foundation Funding for NY schools
- b. Ken Craddock:
  - i. Invited interested members to read his book on Presidential history, entitled Restoring Confidence at the Top (KenCraddock@gmail.com)
- c. John Wagner:
  - i. The Party Reforms Working Group has been reaching out to other Clubs and District Leaders to start building an alliance to reform the state Party
- d. Jordan Stein:
  - i. The Manhattan Young Democrats are hosting a holiday party on December 4th, at 7pm, a The Half Pint
- e. Tricia Shimamura:
  - i. Invited members to the Government staffers holiday party bakeoff – “The Great NYC Political Bakeoff” – at Ryan’s Daughter on December 16th, at 6:30, \$5 at the door (which will go to nonprofits)
- f. Alex Bores:
  - i. He has put together a curriculum to help campaigns protect themselves from foreign interference

8. Adjourn