



General Meeting Minutes June 13, 2019

President David Siffert opened the meeting with a vote on the adoption of the agenda, which was unanimously approved, 20 in favor.

He then announced that in lieu of the President's Report, he would go right to a vote on the **Resolution Supporting City Council Funding of Abortion Access**. This also passed unanimously.

He then read a letter to Assembly Members O'Donnell and Glick urging their support for **S2071B (the Modern Family Act)** regarding gestational surrogacy. This passed with 18 in favor and 2 opposed.

This was followed by District Leader Keen Berger's report, where she thanked the club for re-electing her for the last fourteen years. She has resigned and will be super-ceded by a new District Leader, Jen Hoppe, after the Primary on June 25th. Keen mentioned two issues important to her; the first is a social justice issue: the fact that the 75 Morton Street middle school provides less after-school programs than any other school in District 2. She hopes that VID can write a letter or do some other action to help rectify this. The second issue was the measles epidemic. She mentioned that Dick Gottfried was sitting on the fence on this issue of requiring everyone to be inoculated and doing away with religious exemptions. This is a public health issue, and since the Hell's Kitchen Dems had written a letter on the issue she suggested perhaps VID could, too. (Later in the meeting it was announced the bill had passed.)

Prostitution Legislation

Now Ann and Melanie from *Sanctuary for Families* made a presentation in favor of partial decriminalization of sex workers--criminalizing users and not sellers. They offer extensive services for those who wish to leave the sex trade, and Melanie spoke of her experiences of being trafficked at age 12. They urge reform of the criminal justice system and provide medical, dental, and psychiatric services to their clients. Member Grace Price provided a handout of statistics regarding prostitution arrests in New York, and a discussion ensued.

Green New Deal

Next Justine of the *Sunrise Movement* made a presentation about the Green New Deal (GND). She spoke of being inspired by a sit-in at Nancy Pelosi's office last year demanding people get serious about climate change, and social and economic justice. Justine emphasized getting fossil fuel money out of politics, and alerted us that Hakeem Jeffries, Chuck Schumer, and Max Rose are not on board with the GND. She said Cuomo was cautiously optimistic about passage of the Climate and Community Protection Act. She said the GND seeks to provide good-paying union jobs and restore economic inequities along with providing help for natural disasters. Q and A followed.



Decriminalization of Sex Work

Now Jared Trujillo and Nina Luo of *Decrim NY* spoke, a group which advocates for full decriminalization of sex work. They are pushing the **Trafficking Victims Record Relief Bill**, which has passed the Assembly. Jared, a Legal Aid attorney and former sex worker, spoke of a package of bills called **Stop Violence in the Sex Trades Act** which would decriminalize consensual sex acts between consenting adults, and does not legalize coercion, trafficking, or children. Any coercion would still be illegal. He emphasized that there were consequences to the way sex workers were treated and wished to make these workers safer. Some additional bills were mentioned: Brad Hoylman's bill, ending "loitering for prostitution", also known as walking while trans, and Dick Gottfried's bill, to decriminalize buying, promoting, and engaging in the sex trade. Jared and Nina (also a former sex worker) emphasized they do not advocate for pimping and do not agree with the Nevada style of legalized prostitution, which favors the brothel owners over the workers.

Now District Leader Arthur Schwartz spoke. He reported the County Committee meeting would be in the first part of July--within 3 weeks, and the Judicial Convention would be on August 12. The Beth Israel suit had been argued in court before Judge Hagler, who was totally on our side, and he said he would shortly be filing suit on the 14th Street plan.

He spoke of a second lawsuit regarding the removal of bus stops, especially from Abingdon Square, and related new rules allowing voters to switch registration within 25 days of the primary if in the party, and 60 days if not. Carl Heastie apparently is promoting a bill to change this to 120 days, and this may prompt another lawsuit.

Committee Reports

David Siffert mentioned the possibility of moving the annual Gala date to earlier in the year because of the judicial calendar, and noted we garnered about \$20,000 net this year, which is excellent considering fewer judges attended. He said the postcarding for Dustin Reidy was very successful, with over 500 postcards signed, and reminded everyone of the July 19 fundraiser for Andy Kim.

Deb Sherman gave a short report on the Gun Reform Committee, recounting last week's Brooklyn Bridge march garnered about 660 postcards, even though the turnout was disappointing. That brings the postcard number to about 1200.

Tony Hoffmann of the Campaign Committee reminded everyone there would be no primary in the 66 AD. The County Committee needs people who live in the 66 AD to volunteer. Jerry Nadler will have a fundraiser at the Grand Soho Hotel Monday.

Mar Fitzgerald of the Education Committee was next, saying she attended a protest at the headquarters of the Education Department which targeted segregation in public schools and it went great. There was also a smaller rally to increase diversity in PTAs. DeBlasio provided a



\$2M fund for school districts to develop diversity plans, and 64 of his 67 recommendations were adopted. Mar also wrote a story for Westview News on the 75 Morton Street middle school.

David Siffert spoke for the Animal Advocacy Committee, saying they had sent a letter advising spaying and neutering for sold pets at four months. Linda Rosenthal had an anti-declawing bill with exceptions. The declawing bill passed without exceptions -- which is a big improvement over no bill. VID is planning to propose that the legislature add a narrow exception for individuals who are diagnosed with an illness after getting a cat such that they would have to choose between declawing the cat or turning the cat over to a shelter -- this is true of some people with diabetes, for example. The anti-fur bill was very controversial, and Carlina has a bill banning foie gras. Mike Gianaris sponsored a bill making it illegal to sell dogs, cats, and rabbits in pet stores in New York State.

Under New Business:

David mentioned articles in the Villager on the Gala and Nadler. He mentioned the club will hold two debate watch parties for the Democratic presidential candidates, on June 26 and 27, at two locations, to be determined. There will be ten candidates on each night. On July 17 there will be a VID picnic at a park to be determined.

Sharon Woolums mentioned the passing of Ben Green, former chair of CB2 and neighborhood activist, with an obituary in the Villager. She wants to do a memorial for him at Judson in September and needs volunteers to participate.

Jen Hoppe said **Ranked Choice Voting** was passed by the NYC charter commission and would likely be on the ballot of charter proposals. Susan Dess, a VID member, would be hosting a talk on Anti-Semitism and How To Combat It Tuesday at Phillips Nizer LLC, admission free.

Grace Price, a 9/11 survivor, was having trouble getting psychiatric help from the Victim Compensation Board and needed help.

Jim Yates brought up the Civilian Complaint Review Board, and the loophole deeming police officers telling lies outside the jurisdiction of the Board and asked the Executive Committee to consider a resolution addressing this. A motion was made and was passed unanimously, 22 in favor.

Jen brought up a Saturday demonstration at Foley Square by Move On to Impeach Trump.

Cameron Krause advised us the Carolyn Maloney bill to extend funding for the 9/11 survivor fund passed after John Stewart appeared before Congress. He advised people to call Mitch McConnell to facilitate passage in the Senate. David also advised approaching Chuck Schumer.



Katharine Wolpe noted that every Thursday for the next two months there will be free concerts at 12:30 at 10th Street and Second Avenue, St. Mark's Church in the Bowery.

The meeting was adjourned.