



## General Meeting Minutes July 9, 2020

President David Siffert opened the meeting with the adoption of the agenda, which was unanimous.

In his Presidential Report, he said the Primary went really well, and congratulated everyone for a really great job. He said Jerry Nadler and Rachel Lavine were way ahead of their opponents--the closest race was Carolyn Maloney's, where she and her opponent were within 600 votes. Joe Biden won the nomination, and Deborah Glick was unopposed.

The budget didn't go nearly as well, with cuts to emergency food relief and social services. The cuts to the NYPD were not made. David invited Corey Johnson, Speaker of the City Council--who voted for the budget--to come to this meeting and discuss the vote, but he couldn't make it. Carlina Rivera voted against it, and we owe her thanks for fighting for what's right.

Assemblyman Harvey Epstein gave the club an Albany update, saying we still have a fiscal crisis. The U.S. House passed the HEROES Act, but the Senate won't. The new session starts the week of the 20th. In NYS, there are 20% cuts across the board because the governor is withholding revenue. He said there's a short window to get things done, and to keep pushing this week, because it might be it for the year. Particularly important are bills to save small businesses and cancel rent for tenants. He said we could lose 50-75% of small businesses, but we can do more if we push our local pols.

David said Harvey is really working on revenue bills and Budget Justice. Harvey added that the SCAR Act, about separation of families, has a good chance of passing.

Next up was Jen Hoppe and the District Leader Report. She said she went to all sixteen poll sites in the district on Primary Day, and is putting together a report for the DOE. Some people didn't receive absentee ballots, or received them late and were forced to drop them off at poll sites, and some poll sites were changed at the last minute. She said the BOE fell short on communication and the funding was not in place--if VBM is an option, we must be in a better place. If there were any other concerns, she urged members to contact her.

The counting of absentee ballots has started. Joe Biden released a plan today that he has worked on with Bernie and other activists. And Joy Reed of MSNBC will take over the 7:00 pm time slot--she will be the first black woman on TV in prime time.

Now David introduced Maya Wiley, former chair of the NYC Civilian Complaint Review Board,



Professor at the New School, and legal analyst at NBC and MSNBC. She is also a longtime civil rights activist.

Maya began by saying she loved Joy Reed, who uses her position to improve diversity and wants to do more of a dialogue. She also thanked the club for its resolutions on police reform.

She said there is no question we need to rethink our vision of policing. She spoke of the origins of policing as designed for containment and control. Police as a professional force started at the end of slavery, to contain and control slaves and the working class. Before that, wealthy people hired their own people to do that--after the Civil War, the wealthy decided to shift this cost to the government. In the 1920's and 30's, a professionalized police force was still fairly new, and never designed to keep us all safe.

She spoke of three benches of improvement. The first is shrinking the footprint of the police through defunding--putting money into social services instead of the police. Only 5% of calls to 911 are for serious crimes. NYC has increased the police budget by 34% over the last ten years, despite crime rates going down. The second is problem-oriented policing--using a flying squad of mental health experts for situations requiring them, emphasizing safety rather than crime, and partnering with the Probation Department to help the formerly incarcerated transition back to society in situations where they experience drug addiction, housing insecurity, unstable families, etc. This can result in a 40% drop in rearrests. The third bench is civilian oversight requiring leadership committed to reform, with the public's ability to set priorities. There can be no secrecy-- democratic practices with front end civilian oversight, not back end. One important proponent of training must be de-escalation, but this can't happen if the organization is not reconstructed for problem solving. She said in all the cases where brutality occurred, the police violated their training.

She ended with a quote from Soren Kierkegaard--" Hope is a passion for what is possible."

Her speech was followed by questions and a short discussion on the Camden solution to policing

Jen inserted a few comments on "**Count Every Vote**" letter sent to Cuomo urging the validation of absentee ballots received by June 30, despite the postmark. The letter was unanimously passed

This was followed by a presentation by Reem Ramadan, of CPR--Communities United for Police Reform. She spoke of advocating for the Community Safety Act, four bills which did not pass. CPR worked with the CCRB to expand the ability to prosecute the police. They are still working on justice for Eric Garner. They were working for three years on Justice for New York-- 5 bills, three of which passed: 50a was repealed; the police stat act, requiring transparency, passed; and use of a special prosecutor in prosecutions of police passed.



Other projects in which they are involved are ending marijuana prohibition and reducing arrests for low-level offenses. They are involved in the Budget Justice Campaign, requiring defunding the police and investing in the community. She discussed the budget vote and what went wrong, and getting cops out of schools.

There was a discussion and questions.

Next up was Matthew Malloy, leading an organizing effort in Pennsylvania with Back to Blue, to support Janet Diaz, Michelle Worley, and Biden. He emphasized organizing to get voters to show up, and solicited volunteers for phone banking. He led a discussion and questions. For phone banking, call 347 524-7258. His email is [mmalloy@back2blue2020.com](mailto:mmalloy@back2blue2020.com).

Borough President Gale Brewer now spoke on trying to get Rebecca Seawright back on the ballot as an Independent, and her concerns about the state of the city and the effect of the pandemic on small businesses and restaurants. She addressed the surge in shootings as the result of no jobs, no community centers, and no basketball. People have guns and nothing to do, and it's not clear when people are going back to work. She thanked the club for the work it's doing.

David mentioned the work done by Allison Stowell and Deb Sherman on gun violence, interrupters, and the Student Youth Employment Program. He also mentioned Save Our Stages, to get federal relief for music venues, and said our representatives must be pushed to support it, as an important part of New York.

Gale fielded questions about bars and restaurants being closed due to crowding. She said on the city level, the Department of Health should tell businesses what the rules are, and the SLA should do so on the state level. She said the police should not be involved in these infractions, especially involving the homeless or mentally ill.

Now David read the **Bird-Friendly Glass Resolution**, requiring all new construction to use bird-friendly glass and requiring existing buildings to replace their windows by 2030. (This passed overwhelmingly by email.)

Tony Hoffmann, of the Campaign Committee, thanked everyone for their work on the Primary, and said it looked like all our endorsed candidates won their races. Counting ballots for Carolyn Maloney's race will begin on Monday, and we should know the outcome by the end of the week. He thanked David for putting together the texting and phone banking events and Ed Yutkowitz for the mailings, etc.

David said there would be an event Thursday for Andy Kim, and he will attend on zoom. Kim won by a tight margin in 2018, and is doing a really good job. David will send out a link to the event, and he advised people how to get postcards.



Tony mentioned that we are one of the main organizers of Vote Blue. He hoped we would be busing to Pennsylvania in October (with precautions), but it was not clear yet if this would happen.

David brought up the Gala, on September 16 on zoom, and said we really need to support it. The Honorees will be Keen Berger, Lincoln Anderson, Black Lives Matter, and Vocal NY.

Nat Johnson of the Environmental Committee announced three pipeline successes. The first, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, has been abandoned by Duke Energy and Dominion, who will be shifting to renewable offshore wind power. The other two, the Keystone XL Pipeline, and the Dakota Access Oil Pipeline, have been defeated in the courts. Tammy Duckworth has introduced a bipartisan bill to enhance drinking water infrastructure in distressed communities. Part of this act is the Voluntary Water Partnerships for Distressed Communities Act S.2596, requiring struggling water systems to be sold or leased to private companies. Privatization is NOT the solution, and usually leads to higher rates and worse service in order to maximize corporate profits.

Nat urged members to send a message to Governor Cuomo and the PSC to stop the Gowanus Fracked Gas Plant. Upstate gas utilities RG&E and NYSEG have agreed to zero net growth in gas sales over the next three years. This was spearheaded by AGREE--Alliance for a Green Economy. He also urged members to call their U.S. Representatives and ask them to co-sponsor the Fracking Ban Act (HR 5857).

Jonathan Geballe of the Housing Committee, stated the moratorium on evictions was extended to August 5. The Tenant Safe Harbor Act, a bill from the legislature, was finally signed by Gov. Cuomo. There has been no progress on canceling the rent --everyone is waiting on the federal government for aid.

Under New Business:

David reminded us that two longtime VID members--Ellen Peterson-Lewis and Yvonne Sherwell --recently passed.

The meeting was adjourned.