



Village Independent Democrats
26 Perry Street
New York, New York 10014

General Meeting Minutes, October 15, 2015

Joint Meeting—With Chelsea Reform Democratic Club

VID President Nadine Hoffmann opened her report by talking about Frieda Bradlow and Annette Zaner, still in Village Care Nursing Home. The VID Tenant's Clinic will be operating twice a month since Jonathan Geballe got a second lawyer, Andrew Gonzalez. Roberta Kaplan, wife of Rachel Lavine, has written a book, "Then Comes Marriage", and will be speaking about it on October 26 at the New York Public Library. Gloria Steinem will be there.

District Leader Keen Berger spoke about the upcoming civil court judge election. She has been bombarded with calls about this event. Tanya Kennedy's seat is vacant and Ta-Tanisha James will be on the ballot. She had kind words about the Democratic Presidential Candidates Debate, which did not include anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and anti-woman rhetoric. She's eager to get into campaign gear.

Because Tony Hoffmann was absent due to familial obligations, Nadine gave the report on the Candles for Clemency vigil, testifying as to its success and the fact that 200 people showed up. Alphonso David, Cuomo's Chief Counsel, promised clemencies soon and a meeting with himself, Tony, Allan Roskoff and others has been set up.

Nadine also gave the Campaign Committee Report--the County Committee met last week and determined that each division should have a division leader, by law. On November 1 a meeting will be held to gather the County Committee members and the divisions and determine what is to be done. Also, if there is a quorum, more people will be added to the County Committee.

Surprise guest Arthur Schwartz now spoke about being arrested in his position as ward for an elderly woman who was being surveilled by her landlord--he removed the cameras and was taken into custody briefly. Since he has been appointed ward for several older people, he will try to work with Brad Hoylman's office to get volunteers to visit certain older people once a week. He is involved in Bernie Sanders' campaign and announced a rally on October 21 at Local 1199 where Jim Hightower



will speak. He recommended looking online at Bernie Sanders' website and to also check 'People for Bernie'. Nadine will send out more info.

Jen Hoppe spoke about the Presidential Forum, to be held at the SVA Theater on November 1. Every single candidate's campaign has been contacted and invited; Ronnie Eldridge will be the moderator. Jen urged everyone to register for this event online--capacity is around 450 and 300 (free) tickets have been reserved.

Now it was Brad Hoylman's turn to speak. He talked of the dredging equipment GE has in the Hudson to clean up PCB's; GE wants to dismantle it but studies demonstrate only 65% of the PCB's have been removed. Once this equipment has been removed, it will cost tens of millions of dollars to restore it. Brad said everyone should be outraged and urged everyone to contact him and visit his website--he also advocated signing a petition online at Scenic Hudson.

Jim Fouratt asked about advocating for more debates for the Democratic presidential candidates and Brad said he was in favor. He said NYS was considering giving money to GE to induce them to move their headquarters here. The EPA should be the watchdog here, but seems reluctant to do its job. Brad and others are urging the EPA to study the effects on the water, fish and environment. Brad was asked about Pier 55 and said he didn't know the effect it would have on the environment--pressure must be kept on GE and the EPA to do its job.

Brad also said he was hoping to codify the NYS ban on fracking and close any loopholes. He advocated looking at issues like fracking and the minimum wage to install a progressive vision.

The President of Chelsea Reform Democrats, Michael Schreiber, now opened the Forum on the \$15 Minimum Wage: What Are Its Implications for New York? He said he was proud that Scott Stringer would appear and speak shortly.

Unfortunately, representatives from SEIU32BJ did not appear, so Steven Barrison, lawyer and spokesperson for the Small Business Congress was introduced.

Steven opened by saying he didn't prepare a thing but he'd been doing this for over 33 years. He's been active in SBC for over 20 years. He said the lease renewal process for small business was unfair. The mom and pops must be saved in order to successfully institute the \$15 minimum wage. According to CBS News, the number of vacant storefronts is increasing; Chase Manhattan Bank is closing 300 banks in the NYC area, and Starbucks is closing 125 stores.

Comparing Gale Brewer's bill the SBJSA, he said Brewer's bill did nothing and was probably unconstitutional. He said commercial rent control existed in NYC until 1963. As for the SBJSA, he said arbitration was a great idea--an arbitrator should decide a "reasonable return" for landlord and tenants. He also said that despite accusations of the SBJSA's "unconstitutionality", no one had ever



been able to demonstrate any such problem with it. He said he was not against the \$15 minimum wage, but it would strain already overburdened small businesses and probably should be passed along with the SBISA.

Now Scott Stringer appeared and declared it was a great "twofer" to meet with both the VID and CRDC at one gathering. He said raising the minimum wage to \$15 would have a profound effect on the city, lift people out of poverty, spur local businesses and expand jobs--demonstrated by study after study. He said fast food restaurants made billions on the backs of their workers. He also recognized that thousands of small businesses were struggling, but said the \$15 wage was a real way to spur the economy.

NYC spends \$14 billion on procurement to do business with 46,000 vendors, only 5% of which are owned by women and minorities (MWB). He said in order to level the playing field, many more MWBs must be contracted by corporate America, but the corporate boards suffer from "groupthink". Independent people and women and minorities must be elected to these boards, along with raising the wage and investing in MWBs. Everyone must be accountable.

Charles Houston, the Executive Director of Queens Centers for Services for People with Developmental Disabilities, was next. The goal of his organization was to help the disabled lead lives as normal as possible. QCP can't raise the costs of its services--it's limited by NYS. They have no operating reserves. They are very staff intensive and need increases in government funding. They have a difficult time finding and training low wage employees--they can't staff their programs. He said the government must be part of the solution--QCP can't hire at \$15 hour. He implored those present not to leave his staff behind, and urged contacting the Inner Agency Council to express support and writing letters to Governor Cuomo. Ed Yutkowitz of VID and Linda Longstreet of CRDC will format a letter and distribute it.

This ended the Forum, and Michael Schreiber, president of CRDC, put out a call for Food Pantry volunteers.

Mary Petretti of VID brought attention to the death of Larry Selman, the "Collector of Bedford Street". The corner of Grove and Bedford Streets has been named for him. He collected thousands of dollars for others, and a documentary was made about him in 2002.

Nadine brought attention to the Lenox Hill ED tour, and free flu shots on October 17. She also needed volunteers for the Astor Place Street Fair.

Last but not least, Barbara Ruether read her report on Mrs. Green's Natural Market, which has been experiencing labor problems. The "garbage truck", which had been parked in front of the market has been vanquished, thanks to Tony Hoffmann and Lincoln Anderson of The Villager. Juan Gonzalez, the original anti-union enforcer, has been replaced by Juan Martinez, who has been photographing



employees who attempt to speak to the union organizers of UFCW Local 1500. In the past ten days or so, members of the community have been victimized by push polls hostile to the union, The store denies any knowledge of how telephone numbers were obtained. The Union will be distributing a community petition to allow workers to organize. It is hoped we will participate.

The meeting was adjourned.