



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

General Meeting Minutes  
February 2, 2016

Vice President Erik Coler, standing in for the absent President Nadine Hoffmann, called the meeting to order and opened by introducing two judges, the Honorable James E. d'Auguste and Honorable Alexander M. Tisch.

District Leader Keen Berger followed, saying she found it hard to believe what the Republican candidates were saying, and that people still voted for them. Of course, she said, the Dems were much better.

She reminisced about former campaigns, and said she was very concerned about local issues. She was waiting for Brad Hoylman to tell us where we're needed. This was to be an important year for Democrats. She was concerned about how to get the County Committee activated.

Now Erik introduced Nadine's letter in support of landmarking Julius' Bar. After discussion, the members unanimously approved the letter.

Kathy Slawinski introduced her resolution urging the DNC to schedule more official debates for the Democratic Presidential candidates. After discussion, this, too, was unanimously approved.

Now there was a spirited discussion of the VID Endorsement Calendar, conducted primarily by Keen. After some disagreements, this was also overwhelmingly approved with one abstention and no opposition.

It was now District Leader Arthur Schwartz's turn to speak. He congratulated everyone for coming since it was so cold. He has been retained by the Bernie Sanders campaign and had been working hard on that for the last eight weeks, dealing with hundreds of activists around the state. (He also mentioned Zephyr Teachout's announcement that she will be running in the 19th CD.) He collected 5,000 signatures for Bernie in January and said he will be working more closely with Keen, especially since he expects voter turnout may be twice the norm, especially for first-time voters. He also said he will be running against Deborah Glick in the 66th Assembly District.

Jim Fouratt asked him to explain the super delegate situation. Arthur said there were 250 total delegates in New York: 175 elected by CDs, 55 at-large delegates, and super delegates are the rest. They are Democratic Congresspeople and Senators and members of the DNC. Each state usually gives delegate status to the top electeds, and their votes are not bound by voters in the state. Jim added that super delegates came into play after the disastrous McGovern election, when they were given voting power without being elected, supposedly to prevent the nomination of an unelectable candidate. Jim said Move On is floating a petition asking President Obama to change this.



Erik now brought up the Voter Empowerment Act, saying he had met with Brian Kavanaugh, one of the co-sponsors, to discuss building a coalition to pass it. Brian suggested passing it piecemeal, starting with an early voting provision, which would also solve the problem of excess voters expected in the upcoming election.

The Special Presentation on the Elizabeth Street Garden Site--whether senior affordable housing should be constructed there--now ensued. Tobi Bergman, chair of CB 2, and Janine Kiely discussed alternate sites and spoke of the need for the garden to become an official park site. K Webster, CB 2 resident and President of the Sara D. Roosevelt Park Coalition spoke in favor of the housing. Alison Greenberg moderated.

K spoke about the burgeoning population of seniors who need housing, and the wealth of community gardens in the area. She said the site had been picked by HPD because the land is city-owned. She felt HPD would do it, despite any opposition by the mayor, and that there would be plenty of space there open to the community.

Janine brought up the history of the proposal, as a side deal to the SPURA rezoning agreement with no public notice or involvement. She felt Little Italy, Soho, Noho, and the East Village were underserved by open spaces, and there was an alternative site, 2 Howard, which is currently a parking garage. Jerry Nadler, Deborah Glick, Daniel Squadron, Gale Brewer, CB 2 and New Yorkers for Parks were all in support.

Tobi Bergman spoke of his past history with the park, and the fact that CB 2 had no input whatsoever, though he expected it would come to the CB eventually. A hearing had been held, with 120 people and only 4 in favor of the housing. He spoke of the DEP site at Hudson Street between Howard and Clarkson, and said this space is bigger than the Elizabeth Street site both vertically and horizontally. The Elizabeth Street site was a side deal to SPURA, Bloomberg throwing it in two to three months before his term ended, knowing he would not have to deal with the final ramifications.

Lisa Kaplan, former Chief of Staff for Rosie Mendez and former CB 3 member, differed with this version. She said in 2008 CB 3 entered into negotiations with the city to develop affordable and market rate housing. There was a last minute push for a better deal, and all Margaret Chin could find was the Elizabeth Street site, so everybody jumped on it. Tobi reminded her that the site is in CB 2 and that much had changed since 2008, including the status and community input into the garden.

John Bredin thanked everyone and commended the club for putting democracy first. He acknowledged that parks and housing are needed.

Jen Hoppe now entered into a discussion of the upcoming Gala, to take place Thursday, April 24. She solicited volunteers to find venue sites and Cormac Flynn volunteered to find some. Jim objected that the membership had not been included in choosing honorees, and Kathy informed her that a motion had been made and passed by the Executive Committee to open the nomination of honorees to the membership. Jen had not been so informed.

Under New Business, Ben Yee, of Manhattan Young Dems, announced an organizing event on March 1, Super Tuesday, to be held at the Red Room on East 4th Street. Reps from Bernie and Hillary will be there to expound on their stands on women's issues especially.



Mary Petretti, of the Cornelia Street Coalition, brought forward the planned IFC expansion onto Cornelia Street, involving changing residential zoning to commercial zoning in a very residential area. She distributed literature asking people to contact the CB and protest. She also took names and phone numbers of anyone willing to volunteer.

Cormac Flynn said he wanted the Exec Committee to work up language to evaluate the Presidential candidates on key issues and push those issues in a progressive direction.

Jim reminded the members to educate themselves about the super delegates.

The meeting was adjourned.

