



THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

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Club Meeting, April 10, 2019, 8:00 pm
The Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Avenue at 103 Street, Ballroom

Census 2020: What's at Stake?

Julie Menin, Director of the Census for NYC

Cash Bail

Cyrus Vance, Jr., Manhattan District Attorney

AGENDA

7:45 pm Sign In
8:00 pm Call to Order
Speakers:
Julie Menin
Cyrus Vance, Jr.
Questions & Answers
District Leader Report
Adjourn

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President's Report

By Lorraine Zamora

As a onetime professional fundraiser for nonprofit organizations, what I enjoyed most was working with volunteer boards. That may sound crazy, but it's true. I was always impressed with the amount of time and energy that people would commit to doing—doing good, doing something for others—in return for what they had received and valued in life.

Being president of Three Parks gives me the chance to enjoy that same experience of working with smart, brainy, passionate people dedicated to contributing something to their community. The Three Parks Board is a group of knowledgeable individuals, most of whom know much more about local and state politics than I do. It's not always easy to bring them together; in fact, it can sometimes seem like, as the cliché goes, “herding cats.” But here's what's amazing about this group: whenever there is a goal to be met, a problem to be solved, or an event to be coordinated, board members come together. Somehow, some way, everyone does what has to be done—a splendid example of another cliché, “the sum is worth more than its individual parts!”

Our March 13 club meeting was a good example. We had scheduled a program on “The Fight in Albany for Housing & Rent Regulation.” But just days before the meeting, we learned that our intended speaker was unable to attend; in her place she would send a staff member, fully qualified but less well known. Board members stepped up immediately: what could they do to make sure the program was as stimulating and informative as it could be? Who else could they find to provide the expert insights and analysis that club members expect? A flurry of emails and conversations among board members ensued. One suggested we turn the single-speaker program into a panel discussion and reached out to a well-known tenants' rights advocate. Yes! Another reached out to an experienced tenants' rights lawyer. Yes again! By the morning of our club meeting, we had a full program in place—three experts on housing reform—to be led by yet another board member who volunteered to introduce and moderate the speakers. Everyone acted so quickly, and so cooperatively, that I don't recall more than a moment of worry. It turned out to be one of our most successful panels.

At that same meeting, we also held an endorsement vote for Public Advocate. Here, too, the board came together to get the job done: the ballots were prepared by one board member, last-minute dues required for voting

eligibility were recorded by several others, and the votes cast were counted by two others. Jumaane Williams was the only candidate named on the ballot; the ballot box was open from 8:15 to 9:15 pm. At 9:30 sharp, just before I adjourned the meeting, the results were in: 38 endorsement votes for Jumaane Williams, 5 votes for No Endorsement, and 4 Write-ins. Good job by all!

At our April 10 club meeting, we will welcome Julie Menin, Director of the Census for New York City, and Cyrus Vance, Jr., Manhattan District Attorney. I am sure that the board will come together to ensure another informative night for our club members. I look forward to leading the evening, well assured that my fellow board members will “have my back.” If I ever thought being board president might be “lonely at the top,” I was wrong.

District Leader's Report

By Bob Botfeld

County Committee FAQ, Part II

When does the County Committee meet?

According to the Rules of the Democratic Party of the State of New York, the County Committee must meet within twenty days after the certification of the primary election in which the county committee members are elected. Since the primary date is June 25, the primary won't be certified until June 16. The County Committee will meet in late July or early August. At this meeting, it will elect officers to preside over this and subsequent meetings that may be held over its two-year term. Additional meetings may be called by the Chairperson of the County Committee, the County Leader, by resolution of the Executive Committee, or by a petition from the County Committee members. The petition method requires a minimum number of petitioners from all of the assembly districts.

Where does the County Committee meet?

The County Committee will meet where we can rent a Manhattan venue within the required twenty-day period that is large enough to accommodate over 2,000 county committee members

Do all the 2,000-plus members meet to pick the Democratic nominee when a special meeting of the County Committee is called to fill an unexpected vacancy for an elected official, such as a State Senator, State Assembly member, City Councilmember, or a U.S. House Representative?

No, only County Committee members who represent election districts located within the elected official's district meet. For example, if Robert Jackson, State

Senator for the 31st District, vacates his office before the end of his term, then the County Committee members representing election districts within the 31st District will meet to determine the Democratic nominee.

State Committee Report: Using Zoning to Make Subways Accessible

By Daniel Marks Cohen

According to The New York Times, fewer than a quarter of the almost 500 subway stations in all five boroughs have elevators, which is among the lowest share of any transit system in the world. And you had better hope the elevator is working. For someone with a disability, a broken elevator means canceling a doctor visit or adding additional time, even hours, to access a working elevator and get to an appointment. Seniors disproportionately need elevators too. There is a growing aging population on the Upper West Side (2010 census results show that seniors have increased by 44 percent since 2000, to almost 42,000 adults), and all of New York City is aging as Baby Boomers retire. In the decade between 2005 and 2015, the number of New Yorkers over 65 grew by almost 20%, more than double the city's overall population growth rate (8%). There are now more than 1.1 million seniors over 65 in New York City, representing about an eighth of the population. All those aging knees are going to need elevators, and we are not building them nearly fast enough.

Recently, money was allocated to make cosmetic improvements to subway stations along Central Park West, including the 110th Street station on the B and C lines. Despite shutting down the station for months, no elevator was included in the scope of work. An elevator costs millions of dollars, but keep in mind that there is currently not a single elevator between 59th Street and 125th Street on that line. Recently, disability advocates successfully sued the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in a lawsuit brought under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and now the MTA must install elevators in all subway stations when renovations involve the replacement of stairs. In a ruling by U.S. District Judge Edgardo Ramos, the MTA is obligated to install elevators without regard to cost, unless it's not technically feasible.

That is all well and good, but still a cash-strapped MTA is not going to come up with the billions of dollars needed to make the improvements, even with the congestion pricing being contemplated by the state legislature this year. One thing we can do to help remedy this situation is consider how we can use local zoning, specifically

transportation overlays, to assist us. Take for example the No. 1 train station at 110th Street and Broadway. The southwest corner (which is now a newly-opened CVS pharmacy) is a one-story building underdeveloped according to the local zoning. At some point that site will be developed into a multifamily apartment building. Community Board 7 should consider a transportation overlay now, to make any future development on that site pay for a second stair and an elevator. The site has higher value by its close proximity to the subway, so why not capture some of that value by requiring the developer to help pay for subway improvements? If necessary, I would even argue in favor of a slight upzoning of the site, to allow some additional density in exchange for developers paying for the improvements.

The same goes for 125th Street and Broadway. There are two potential development sites at that subway stop. One, at the southwest corner, is currently a McDonald's but is owned by Columbia as part of its Manhattanville expansion. The other, at the southeast corner, is currently a privately owned one-story retail strip in front of NY-CHA Grant Houses. We should rezone those two sites to require any developer to help pay for subway improvements – in this case, elevators to the elevated tracks at the 125th Street station. We could have done the same rezoning for the B and C lines when the Circa building was being constructed at the northeast corner of 110th Street and Central Park West. We missed our chance there, but let's not miss out on the Broadway subway stops.

Endorsement Vote for Public Advocate

Here are the results of the Endorsement Vote held at TPID's club meeting on March 13:

38 Jumaane Williams

5 No Endorsement

4 Write-ins:

(3 Ruben Vargas; 1 Melissa Marks-Viverito)

Join the Fight to Strengthen Tenants' Rights in New York State

New York State's rent stabilization laws are due to expire this coming June; groups such as the Metropolitan Council on Housing are campaigning to replace them with measures to protect and expand tenants' rights. At the Three Parks membership meeting on March 13, Summer Stephanos from Met Council described several such bills now before the state legislature. If enacted, these bills would: expand renters' rights to cover all of New York State, so that renters across the state can fight to bring rent controls to their communities; end rent hikes and tenant

harassment caused by loopholes in rent stabilization; eliminate the “vacancy bonus” that landlords receive every time a rent-stabilized apartment turns over, which gives them an incentive to harass and evict long-term tenants; eliminate rent hikes caused by major capital improvements, when landlords pass on the costs to tenants forever; and end vacancy-decontrol rules that allow landlords to take rent-stabilized apartments out of regulation when an existing tenant leaves.

This month, Met Council will be sponsoring a rally in support of these bills. Here are the details:

Moral March for Housing

April 11, 2019, at 5:30 pm

Abyssinian Baptist Church, 132 West 138th Street

For information: www.metcouncilonhousing.org

Role of U.S. Government in Boeing Crashes

By Wendy Dannett

Two crashes of Boeing’s 737 Max 8 airliner in less than a year have brought worldwide attention to this aircraft. The first disaster was the crash of a Lion Air flight in Indonesia in October 2018, killing 189 people. After a second crash in Ethiopia in March 2019, killing 157 people, the plane was grounded worldwide, though not by the United States until three days after all other countries had done so. A malfunction of the new MCAS stall-prevention software system was implicated. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said evidence at the Ethiopian crash site showed similarities to the Indonesia crash and warranted investigation of a possible shared cause. “Despite international outcry, the United States and Canada are continuing business as usual,” said Amy Goodman of Democracy Now in the immediate aftermath of the Ethiopian plane crash.

It is not surprising that Boeing got away with not having the Boeing 737 MAX 8 immediately grounded and inspected in this country. President Trump has shown favoritism to Boeing, calling it a “truly great company,” and has promoted its products. Before entering the White House, he cultivated a personal relationship with Boeing’s chief executive, Dennis Muilenberg. Boeing negotiated a “deal” for two 747 jumbo jets as presidential planes for \$3.9 billion, according to Time Magazine. The public was told this deal was “a bargain.”

Trump’s acting Secretary of Defense is Patrick Shanahan, who was previously an executive at Boeing for more than three decades, according to Time. Boeing happens to be one of the largest suppliers to the U.S. military, but Shanahan has fended off questions of conflict of interest. Shanahan did not publicly support

an investigation into the 737 MAX 8 until almost a week after the Ethiopian crash. That was after a government watchdog group, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW) wrote a 9-page complaint to the Pentagon’s inspector general, urging the agency to scrutinize the relationship between Shanahan and Boeing. CREW was concerned because Shanahan was pushing the government to purchase more Boeing fighter jets, which the Pentagon didn’t want. He was also castigating Boeing’s competitor, the Lockheed Martin Corporation.

Further evidence of the collusion between Boeing and the government is the role of Boeing employees in the FAA certification of Boeing aircraft. In 2005, the FAA established a program whereby plane makers like Boeing could choose their own employees to act on the agency’s behalf in helping to certify new models, reports The New York Times. The latest Boeing 737 was certified in early 2017. It is not clear if it was then recognized that there was a problem with the MCAS system. But Boeing had software upgrades on the market before the two fatal crashes.

Boeing, like other plane manufacturers, offers upgrades on its planes. Often the upgrades are for larger seats or additional bathrooms. But they can also be for safety features, such as software or oxygen masks, says the Times. The airlines pay for these upgrades, and selling them is a lucrative business for Boeing and other aircraft manufacturers. Gol Airlines, a Brazilian carrier, paid \$6,700 for oxygen masks for its crew and \$11,900 for an advanced radar system control panel, according to the Times. But many airlines, especially low-cost carriers like Indonesia’s Lion Air, have opted not to buy add-ons. Regulators don’t require them. So the planes that crashed did not have the MCAS software upgrades. Now, after further confirmation of the problem with the

Please Come!
Three Parks 44th Annual Benefit
April 28, 2019 1:00 to 4:00pm
Honoring
Brian Benjamin, State Senator, 30th District
Robert Jackson, State Senator, 31st District
Peter Arndtsen, Manager,
Columbus Amsterdam BID
Click on Fundraiser on threeparksdems.org

MCAS, Boeing gives the software upgrades for free.

The most optimistic aspect, I think, of the terrible situation with the government and Boeing was the effectiveness of the watchdog group CREW and the effectiveness of the public and foreign governments to influence Trump and Boeing. According to Ralph Nader, “This is a plane whose misguided software overpowered its own pilots...if we don’t control artificial intelligence, it’s going to destroy [us].” Nader lost a grandniece on the Ethiopian flight. He cited the group FlyersRights.org for anyone who wants more information on their flight.

Beyond Congestion Pricing

By David Lazarus

On March 21, I attended the congestion pricing forum hosted by Borough President Gale Brewer at Cooper Union. I learned that although it’s hard not to like the idea of reducing car traffic in Manhattan and securing funding for the MTA, the devil is in the details (and very few such details seemed to be nailed down at this point). My impression is that some form of congestion pricing is going to pass in the current legislative session, but it likely will be less than perfect. Certain groups (e.g. yellow cab drivers, people with lower incomes) may be unfairly and/or unequally impacted. Funds collected may not all actually get to mass transit (being soaked up by commissions on bond placements, costs for congestion pricing administration, etc.), and funds that are spent on mass transit may not be spent wisely.

But several ideas put forward by various participants in the forum seemed excellent to me, and I think they will remain excellent ideas regardless of the eventual form and fate of congestion pricing. So I would like to list here a sampling (with some comments/embellishments by me), with the hope that we in Three Parks might consider championing a few of them in the months and years to come:

- 1.** Fund expanded parking at suburban train stations. Lack of parking is a big reason suburbanites drive instead of ride; championing this would allow us to make common cause with suburbanites and decrease car usage at the same time.
- 2.** Charge parking fees at market rates for construction equipment blocking street lanes.
- 3.** Put a surcharge on Lyft/Uber rides in Midtown. This sounds easy to do, but claims were made that Lyft/Uber will actually be paying lower fees than

yellow cabs, despite apparently being the largest contributor to the increased congestion.

4. Rein in the MTA by measures such as a public audit, a rule requiring a specific capital spending plan, more city representation on the board and a better approval process for giant projects like the Second Avenue, seven train extensions, and the huge renovations at Fulton Street and at Atlantic Avenue.

5. Impose a surcharge on real estate located close to subway express stops (since value is enhanced greatly by proximity to express stops, and a **lot** of value exists close to those stops—e.g. Wall Street, Times Square, Grand Central).

6. Levy a tax on super-expensive and “pied-a-terre” apartments.

7. Levy a penny-per-share transfer tax on stock transactions. This could raise large amounts from speculators without hurting small investors, and decrease market instability at the same time.

Tell Congress: Hands Off Venezuela!

By Erlend Kimmich

Once again we are being fed propaganda to lead us into another U.S.-backed regime change destined for disaster. Venezuela is the target du jour. Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo are leading the crusade. Even Reagan-era Assistant Secretary of State Elliot Abrams, that aging war criminal, onetime apologist for massacres of civilians in El Salvador by U.S.-backed troops, and a key architect of the Iraq war, has been summoned to invoke the heinous specter of torture and bloodshed. It is horrifying to witness this madness unfolding in the familiar pattern: economic destabilization, sabotage, terrorism, and electoral manipulations, followed by invasion. That most of our elected officials are on board is infuriating. Bad, misinformed decisions based on lousy media coverage and disinformation have already cost hundreds of thousands of lives in our recent history.

The familiar rhythms of the war drums beating for regime change are deafening, muting debate, and discouraging investigation of the facts in their monolithic cadences. Fox, MSNBC, and the rest are in agreement about Venezuela. Congress is also almost of one voice denouncing Venezuela President Nicolás Maduro as a dictator needing replacement.

By definition, it would be wrong to call Maduro a dictator. After the death of President Hugo Chávez in 2013, Maduro won the presidency in what was deemed by

the Carter Foundation and other international observers to be a fair election. By 2017 tensions inside Venezuela had been heightened by public comments by President Trump and his circle that a coup and U.S. military action “were on the table” if Venezuelans did not knuckle under and change their government. In spite of this, in May 2018, faced with open hostility and threats from the United States, Venezuelans elected Maduro to a second presidential term. Some of the right-wing opposition parties favored a boycott of the vote, hoping to discredit the elections as illegitimate. Their boycott plan was betrayed by other right wingers like Henri Falcón, who ran for president anyway. Voter turnout in 2018 was lower than usual and resulted in Maduro winning with 67% of the vote to Falcón’s 21% and Javier Bertucci’s 11%. An international observer mission led by the Council of Electoral Experts of Latin America said that the vote was clean.

Trump, Pompeo, Pence, and Rubio have been beside themselves ever since Maduro’s re-election. Juan Guaidó, a right-wing operative and the leader of the opposition party in the National Assembly, was given the green light to announce himself interim president. Our media and Trump are selling Guaidó as the hope for a return to democracy. Meanwhile the U.S.-backed violence continues in hopes that an incident will provide the pretext for an invasion. The recent fire bombing of a so-called humanitarian aid truck was even laid bare as a hoax in The New York Times. American officials who had claimed that the attack on the truck was by Venezuelan security forces stopped talking about it after videos of the attack showed it was carried out by either Venezuelan or Colombian right-wing terrorists in civilian clothes. See it here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/10/world/americas/venezuela-aid-fire-video.html>. The aid shipments that were not allowed into Venezuela may contain riot gear.

The situation is not improving. In late March a major power outage in Venezuela may have been the result

of sniper attacks on a transformer station. The people of Venezuela are on edge, fearing direct U.S. military intervention. Russia and China have both demanded respect for Venezuela’s sovereignty at meetings of the UN. As recently as March 29, the Trump administration again threatened military intervention. US News reports that the Russians have sent 100 military personnel to Caracas.

Our leaders do not want a negotiated solution. Said Vice President Pence: “This is no time for dialogue; this is time for action.” Where are our Democrats on this issue? Hands on their hearts pledging allegiance to the rantings of Rubio? Where do Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand stand on this? It’s high time to ask our congressional representatives to co-sponsor H.R. 1004, Representative David Cicilline’s bill that would prohibit any funds being used by President Trump for an unconstitutional war without Congressional approval. Demand:

- a) NO military actions or threats against Venezuela
- b) Immediate end to sanctions and to U.S. seizure of Venezuela government assets.

Reasonable alternative sources for what is happening in Venezuela are:

<https://www.telesurtv.net/SubSecciones/en/country/venezuela/>

<https://venezuelanalysis.com/>

<https://afgj.org/category/venezuela-2>

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/02/08/juan-guaido-the-man-who-would-be-president-of-venezuela-doesnt-have-a-constitutional-leg-to-stand-on/>

<https://www.mintpressnews.com/the-making-of-juan-guaido-how-the-us-regime-change-laboratory-created-venezuela-coup-leader/254387/>.

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You Are Invited!

Three Parks 44th Annual Benefit Sunday, April 28, 2019 1:00-4:00 pm

Honoring:

Brian Benjamin, State Senator, 30th District

Robert Jackson, State Senator, 31st District

Peter Arndtsen, Manager,

Columbus Amsterdam Business Improvement District

Mexican Festival Restaurant, 2672 Broadway at 102 Street

Three Parks needs you to support Democrats
who are fighting to restore our democracy.

Please join us at one of these levels:

\$500 Benefactor \$300 Patron \$200 Sponsor

\$175 Guest \$50 Member

If you would like to attend, please click on Fundraiser on our home page
ThreeParksDems.org or call Lorraine Zamora at (917) 348-5136.

2019 MEMBERSHIP FORM

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Cathedral Station, P.O. Box 1316, New York, NY 10025 Attn: Treasurer

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Next Meeting: April 10, 2019

Census 2020: What's at Stake?

Julie Menin

Director of the Census for NYC

Cash Bail

Cyrus Vance, Jr.

Manhattan District Attorney

Upcoming Meetings

Wednesday, April 10, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Club Meeting

Wednesday, April 24, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Board Meeting

Sunday, April 28, 1:00–4:00 pm

TPID Annual Fundraising Benefit

Wednesday, May 8, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Club Meeting

Wednesday, May 22, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Board Meeting