

THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

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DECEMBER 2012 NEWSLETTER



CALENDAR

Wednesday, December 12, 2012

Three Parks Board Meeting, 8 PM

Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103rd St

Wednesday, January 9, 2013

Three Parks Meeting, 8 PM

Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103rd St.

Wednesday, January 23, 2013

Three Parks Board Meeting, 8 PM

Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103rd St.

OBAMA BIDEN 2012

102nd & Broadway

By Bob Boffeld

It is a bit audacious. Rent a campaign space the size of a national campaign office and hope that our neighbors, most of whom we have yet to meet, will provide tables for work space and chairs to sit on, staff the thirty-four phones that we optimistically rent as part of package deals from Verizon and Time Warner Cable, fill the buses that we do not have, and pay for all this – rent, phones, cable, electricity - with tens of thousands of small three dollar donations for tens of thousands of Obama buttons. We have forty-nine days to do this.

It's our quadrennial exercise in community involvement and trust. We, Three Parks Independent Democrats together with Broadway Democrats, have to trust that our west side community will both pitch in and uniquely, because to fund our efforts we run a substantial button business, become our trustworthy partners in the Obama button business.

On September 13 on behalf of Three Parks Independent Democrats and Broadway Democrats, I lease the large former Strawberry clothing store empty except for a large filthy carpet. But slowly at first, it starts. Jay, new to the neighborhood from California, offers to help clean the carpet and together with club member Erl, rent a carpet scrubber and after fifty buckets of black water are dumped out we begin to have a clean space.

Our club members with cars, Wendi, Erl, and Elizabeth start shuttling in tables, desks, chairs, telephones, computers, and supplies from storage and individual donors. However, this space is so big that we need even more tables and chairs. Again our west side community – this time our valued institutions – churches, Alfred Placeres's Hispanic center, the American Youth Hostel, and local business groups loan the tables and chairs we need. Columbia University chips in when we learn that the Computer Science graduate school is dumping sturdy 8-foot folding tables and swivel chairs.

Ernestine Gallagher creates and organizes the food area and makes sure the cleaning is complete – as she does every four years. Lynn Thomas creates our storefront appearance and manages our button business – often staying until the wee hours of the morning to make sure the button supply and the

storefront is ready for the next day.

To reach out to our neighbors we need volunteers to staff the tables – organized every day by Lynn and Steve Max and prepared by Lauren Williams and LynnThomas. Lynn and Steve devise systems to keep track of our wide spread tablers and hound the rest of us, often successfully, to follow their very useful and successful tracking system.

Early tablers are key – before we are fashionable. Maria, Regina, Maryanne, Christine, Wilhelmina, Rochelle, Rachel, Linda, Emma, Suellyn, Shashi, Lois, Robin, Gretchen, Jock, Sandra, Eve, Lorraine and Marshall are mainstays in keeping our table outreach and recruitment and button donations going day after day. However, without the daily supervision and dedication of Mary Ann Marks at our storefront table, we would not be successful.

Cynthia Doty organizes the back two-thirds of the storefront space - the phone banking center. To save hundreds of dollars of telephone installations fees, we do our own installations – led by Alex Medwedew with Erl Kimmich. . But Cynthia's key contribution is recruiting her neighbor, Judith Gold, to organize the phone bank. Judy Wood later joins Cynthia and Judith to manage the stampede of phone bankers that jams the storefront during the final weeks.

In 2012, we also need data entry people to input the results of every Obama call every night. With grace and good spirits, Divya, Marla, Jonathan, John, and Min faithfully come every night to complete the phone bank data entry by 10:00pm.

It's been documented that the most effective volunteer campaign technique is to physically knock on someone's door and talk to him or her in person. In 2008 Cynthia Doty, Lynn Max and Elizabeth Kellner, perfected the Three Parks' highly efficient bus campaign trip method which included creating a relationship with a needy Obama Pennsylvania campaign office, renting and managing our own buses, and carefully recruiting for and selling \$25 reservation seat tickets to fill our Obama buses.

In 2012 the official Obama campaign, Obama for America, (OFA), disables our system: OFA runs its own free buses from midtown and parcels out the free seats in a less than consistent and reliable method – also eliminating the viability of our \$25 ticket system.

How do we schedule bus trips that we do not control? The first two weeks we pay for and rent vans and our own bus to cover OFA's cancelled trips. Erl, Jay, and Jock pitch in to drive our vans .

Then we get lucky. One late September evening I am sitting at our storefront button table around 8:30 pm when a fellow named Dick Mann sees our table and stops to chat. A very nice and thoughtful man, he is responsible for co-ordinating volunteers and groups for OFA in the Upper West Side among other places. Over coffee the next day and over the next few weeks he learns about what we have accomplished

and to trust what we can do. After a period of negotiation and with the assistance of our party chairman, Keith Wright, many of the free buses become Three Parks' buses and leave from our storefront.

Then the real work begins because now we have to confirm volunteers for free seats – not that easy. Lynn Max and Daniele Gerard take on the unenviable task of calling to confirm three potential passengers for each seat that is available. But with Cynthia's assistance coordinating the morning bus dispatch, we earn a reputation for reliability and by the campaign's end, we are offered as many free buses as we can fill.

Other key events seem to work well. We have a Grand Opening that loudly announces our presence in the neighborhood and kicks off our most successful weekend to date. We hold four debate parties each filled with volunteers, club members and passersby.

It is an amazing effort -- so many help. The intelligent storefront dispatchers at the reception table who gently direct the volunteers each day and cordially answer all their questions include Lorraine Zamora, Marie Lunn, Corinne Pettey, Faye Schneier, Elizabeth Kellner, and Gretchen Borges. Bruce Markens and Barbara Lee lead the phonebanking for Elizabeth Warren.

Lynn Max co-ordinates the trips to upstate New York and Staten Island. Erl leads a team to Connecticut for Chris Murphy.

Finally, the team from Broadway Democrats led by Curtis cArluck and his wife Katy and include Ed Sullivan, Joe Nunley, Patti Jacobs, Laura Friedman, and the tireless David Weiman and Pat Rayburn staff our most lucrative table at 110th street and Broadway on weekends.

It ends with a terrific Obama victory, after 75,000 calls are made, hundreds of volunteers travel to Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and upstate New York contacting thousands of voters, over five thousand voters are registered, and we are financially successful covering all our expenses and more thanks to the hard work of tireless club members and our terrific west side community.

STOREFRONT RECAP

By Judy Wood

We had a slow start this year at our campaign storefront. It seemed so spacious and maybe a bit empty in September. But by October we revved up as folks in the community tuned in to the most important election we've seen in decades.

We received call sheets daily for voters in Ohio and Pennsylvania from Organizing for America, which was the Obama campaign nationwide, and people showed up, and showed up, and called. And at the end of each day we had some really dedicated volunteers who entered the data on-

line tallied by the callers. We made 70,000 calls during our time there. It was a phenomenal effort, twice as large as 2008. Every day it seemed more people showed up. The last Sunday before Election Day there were more than 70 people making calls – on our phones and theirs.

I know we reelected Sherrod Brown, Ohio Senator. As we looked at our call sheets it became apparent that about 15% of the calls were actually answered.

We also called for other candidates in the area in order to win Senate and House seats. And success was ours in most cases – Elizabeth Warren is the new Democratic senator from Massachusetts replacing Republican Scott Brown. Chris Murphy beat Linda McMahon to succeed Joe Lieberman in Connecticut. In the Hudson Valley we ousted a Tea Party House member, Nan Hayworth, where Sean Patrick Maloney is now the new member of the House.

In addition to calling, there were trips to Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, the Hudson Valley, and Brooklyn. Over 375 people travelled by bus and car and train and subway and ferry to campaign and canvas for our candidates.

The volunteers who came also registered voters and sold buttons and T-shirts to help fund our efforts. Our sign-in sheets tell the story – over 850 people came to work, help, register, and table up and down Broadway day after day to buttons to all. It was great to see people wearing them around the neighborhood.

Our voter registration effort was phenomenal – 5500 forms filled out, glued, and mailed to the Board of Elections. Also absentee ballot applications and information for voters from other states trying to figure out what to do so they could vote. The results of this were seen nationwide on election night.

To all of you who participated, called, tallied, entered data etc. a huge thank you. You know who you are. It was a privilege to work with all of you on this shared important goal

AND WE WON

The elation of Election Night is still with me.

THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS IN THREE CITY COUNCIL DISTRICTS

By Elizabeth Kellner

The revised plan proposed by the Districting Commission, which post-census redrew the boundaries of all 51 New York City Council Districts, divides Three Parks Independent Democrats' (TPID) neighborhood among three separate council districts. In none of these three districts is the TPID portion centrally located which means our residents will most likely have to travel far for constituent

services. This geographic remoteness from the heart of each new district could mean our needs and concerns will be equally remote in terms of Council Member priorities and attention.

A small south western portion of TPID's neighborhood will be in the new 6th District. This is Gale Brewer's old seat (she is term limited), and there are several announced candidates for the Democratic Primary to succeed her.

TPID's outstanding and progressive District Leader, Cynthia Doty, was known to be considering a run in the new 7th District (the seat now held by the also term limited Robert Jackson) into which falls the major portion of TPID's territory, her natural base. Cynthia was gerrymandered out of the 7th District (by a zig zag on her block) and would have to promise to move if she ran. The new 7th also includes most of Manhattan Valley, all of Douglass Houses, Morningside Heights, Manhattanville, West Harlem and a small southern portion of Washington Heights.

The last of TPID's three City Council districts is the 9th where incumbent Inez Dickens is running for re-election from her large Central Harlem base. Only a sliver of Manhattan Valley, from 110th to 97th, east of Columbus or Manhattan Avenues (the line runs down the middle of these streets) falls into the 9th, so it really does look like a giant handle or tail dangling in the southwest corner of this otherwise compact and contiguous Harlem district.

In case you haven't noticed, all of the above means TPID will be losing the representation of the outstanding incumbent Melissa Mark Viverito because we are no longer part of the 8th District. Viverito is running for re-election, but her district was radically transformed by the Commission moving 50% of it to the Bronx. This is but one manifestation of another grievous injustice inflicted on all Manhattanites who will suffer a significant dilution of their representation at the City Council under the proposed lines. The Manhattan districts are all as populous as they can "constitutionally" be under the City Charter, and most of the outer borough districts are as least populous as they can be measured by the same standard. This means there is as much as a 10% variance between the relatively larger population of each Manhattan seat and the smaller population of the non-Manhattan districts.

On November 19, the Districting Commission sent it's final proposal to the City Council for approval. Somewhat unexpectedly, Council Speaker Quinn sent the proposal back to the Commission before the Council even considered it, primarily, it seems, because of the uproar over an eleventh hour change which would permit disgraced serial sexual harasser Vito Lopez to run for an open seat. The injustice to Manhattanites, and the butchering of Viverito's district do not seem to have generated the same headlines, though Common Cause New York has been following this closely. It is not known whether the Commission will make any changes in response to Quinn's request, or whether there will be any further hearings since the public has had no opportunity to comment on the revised lines sent to the

Council. Whatever version of the new lines ends up before the City Council for an up or down vote (the Council has no authority to make changes to the proposal), the Council itself will probably schedule hearings to take public comment.

Undoubtedly legal challenges are under consideration by some groups, but nothing can be challenged in court before the Council actually votes. In the meantime, Common Cause New York's website, click on "Redistricting", is an excellent source of information on what has happened, what's at stake, and what can be done.

MEETING WITH SENATOR SCHUMER RE: THE GRAND BARGAIN By Daniele Gerard

A coalition representing 46 labor, advocacy, and community groups including Three Parks Independent Democrats met on Friday 11/30 with Senator Schumer and members of his staff. The meeting was organized by Rekindling Reform and Hunger Action Network and included their representatives and others from DC 37 AFSCME, Metro New York Health Care for All, CUNY's Professional Staff Congress, Citizen Action, and Center for Independence of the Disabled-NY, each of whom spoke briefly regarding their specific area of expertise. Steve Max, Co-Chair of the Three Parks Social Security Committee, presented over 1000 petition signatures to preserve and strengthen Social Security gathered by the club; I was asked to facilitate the coalition's presentations.

For over two years, Three Parks has stood almost alone among progressive organizations and elected officials in its opposition to the Social Security Payroll Tax cut, which undermines the system's independence. It was gratifying to see that our view has now become the mainstream liberal opinion.

What we conveyed to Senator Schumer

NO BARGAIN IS BETTER THAN A BAD BARGAIN!
By bad bargain, we meant one in return for grudging acceptance by Republicans of some tax cuts in which the Democrats accept deep cuts in social programs. In principle, Senator Schumer agrees with us and sees himself as aligned with other progressive Democratic Senators, including Bernie Sanders. Senator Schumer stressed the importance of protecting the poor in any final deal. He cautioned, however, that "going over the cliff is better than a bad deal, but it is no bargain," saying that although it might strengthen the Democrats' position on taxes, it could weaken their positions with respect to spending cuts, especially on defense.

What we learned

The Senate Democratic caucus has agreed on the following:

1. Support for revoking the Bush tax cuts on people earning \$250,000 or more; Schumer said the Democrats (even conservative ones) seem to be holding fast to a rise to 39.6 percent.
2. Keeping the tax cuts for everyone else.
3. Keeping Social Security out of the budget talks altogether, not renewing the payroll tax cut, and

- finding other ways to reduce taxes paid by working people.
- 4. Refusing to accept any cuts in Medicaid.
- 5. Reinstating long-term unemployment insurance.

The Senate Democratic caucus apparently has not yet come together on any definitive way to protect SNAP/food stamps, but the Senator acknowledged that proposed cuts in the Farm Bill pose a threat.

Some members of the caucus, notably Senator Durbin, have indicated that they could accept cuts in Medicare benefits such as raising the age of eligibility. It is not clear yet if the President has accepted or rejected these views. Senator Schumer has met with Senators Sanders, Brown, Levin, and Whitehouse; they are drafting an alternative proposal that saves money in the Medicare budget but does not cut benefits. One way in which this could be done is to authorize Medicare to negotiate the prices of prescription drugs, a power it has been prevented from exercising. This step alone would save \$260 billion over ten years. Another idea Sen. Schumer shared is having Medicare pay the Medicaid rate for drugs for people who are jointly enrolled in both programs, which he said would save another \$110 billion over ten years.

Schumer stated that there was a good chance that cuts could be made to cut the Department of Defense budget. He also told us that corporate tax rates, cutting corporate loopholes (including for shipping jobs overseas and for tax-avoidance altogether), and instituting a financial transaction tax are not part of current negotiations about the fiscal cliff.

Schumer sees no prospect for an early agreement with the Republicans and believes that the President and Democratic legislators will insist on their current position on taxes. He sees the possibility that some Republicans will abandon their intransigence on taxes. He believes that as much pressure as possible needs to be brought on Republican Members of Congress and that keeping the focus on increasing income tax rates for those making above \$250,000 is winning for the Democrats and positions them well for negotiating on other aspects of a final budget deficit reduction agreement. Sen. Schumer also stated that we should not refer to “entitlement programs,” but specifically call each program by its name.

Bottom line

This is good news about Senate Democrats’ strong support for the top tax rate’s being restored to Clinton levels and about no further payroll tax holidays. Food stamps and Medicare, however, remain in danger. We need to keep pressure on Senators and members of Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, to protect these programs as a priority.

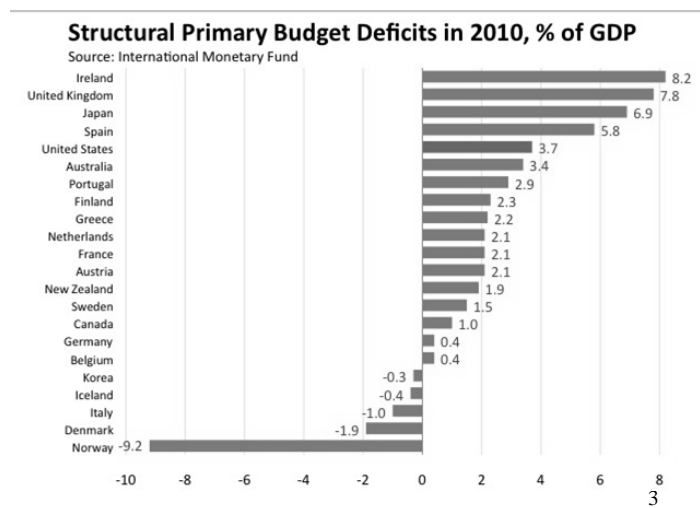
THE DEFICIT IN PERSPECTIVE
By Steve Max

The deficit isn’t something that President Obama did. It is a global situation that no amount of cuts in social programs will change. The two charts below show that the U.S. has generally run budget deficits since the Second World War and that deficits are the rule throughout almost the entire industrial world.

The US is in its fifth decade of growth stagnation and the pattern is similar in the European Union and Japan. Economist James Gailbrath¹ put it well when he said that the deficit is an outcome, not a policy. It is an outcome of low growth and the state of the economy. He added that neither cutting spending nor raising taxes will get rid of the deficit. There are very good reasons to raise taxes on the rich, but eliminating the deficit isn’t one of them.

When the private sector can’t adequately drive the economy, the public sector has to pick up the pieces with increased spending for such varied costs as Medicaid, food stamps, unemployment benefits, infrastructure repair, or middle class tax relief, and it has to do so with less money coming in.

Between the years 1800 and 1939, deficits occurred only one third of the time and that was mainly due to wars. We now have a toxic combination of permanent war economy and the international stagnation of growth that began in the 1970’s. This is the basic cause of the deficit. The best way to lower the deficit in the future is to raise it now in order to finance massive public spending that directly puts people to work.



¹ American Prospect 2/17/11

² “Deficis” in original. Source: DaveManuel.com

³ International Monetary Fund

STATE COMMITTEE REPORT

By Daniel Marks Cohen

I have just seen the new lines for the City Council, and I am surprised. And disappointed. After testimony from all three clubs, and from the current city councilmember Inez Dickens to redraw the maps so that the Upper West Side would not be cut up into multiple pieces, we find ourselves, particularly at the northern part of the district, in a familiar place: split between three districts: now between the 6th, 7th, and 9th council districts, currently represented by Gale Brewer, Robert Jackson, and Dickens.

This is a modest improvement over the previous scenario, where we were represented by FOUR councilmembers (the fourth being Melissa Mark-Viverito, of the 8th district), and I suppose this is what the Redistricting Commission considers progress. The dividing lines have shifted north and east, so that now instead of the demarcation point being 96th Street and Broadway, it is roughly north of 99th Street and east of Columbus. It is less clean than before, and still divides the northern part of the Upper West Side into three pieces, but the 7th is now a viable second council district winnable by someone from the Upper West Side, or at least significantly influenced by it. And that is an improvement over our previous condition. But not by much.

Melissa Mark Viverito objected to the new lines. She, in fact, did get really trampled on – half her district is now in the Bronx, which all but hands the seat to the Bronx machine at the next open seat, a loss for East Harlem which has never really had a strong political organization and largely been dominated by individual charismatic personalities (such as Adam Clayton Powell, IV).

Switching subjects, I wanted to report on the Reform Caucus drama in the State Committee, as there was a bit of drama at the last meeting in September. Following the primary, the party leadership abruptly called for a meeting – largely because it forgot to give us enough notice to gather to vote on Presidential electors to the Electoral College that will meet in January to elect a President. Rather dry stuff, and between the short notice, the location (Albany) and the limited agenda (the business meeting took all of 20 minutes), the turnout was very light. The chair of the Reform Caucus, Peter Stein, called for a new election, arguing that it was timely and necessary, despite ample evidence it was neither.

Despite our objections to the legality or appropriateness of

the meeting, downstate progressives fielded a candidate for chair (Rachel Lavine, State Committeewoman from the 66th AD), but we fell short and Peter was re-elected. Even though this battle was wholly within the Democratic Party, there are really two factions, from the City (who tend to be more diverse and progressive) and from the suburbs (who tend to be whiter, older, male and less open-minded). At one point there was a shouting match between women from downstate and men from upstate, and feeling like we were not being heard, we walked out of the meeting and mass-defected from the Reform Caucus. There was talk of creating another Caucus, perhaps called the Progressive Caucus, (to which I joked I would create the RADICAL Caucus), and we will see how things unfold now that the elections are over.

One final personal comment: Some of you know that my dad is very sick, I feel like the time has come to let you all know my dad has late-stage kidney cancer, and probably won't survive into the New Year. My dad is getting excellent care because of Medicare, and this most recent election was personal for me since the Romney/Ryan ticket were threatening to change the program which is easing my dad's pain and giving my mom peace of mind. My dad is the smartest, kindest, most decent man I know. He was overjoyed when I ran for State Committee, and together with my mom, is my biggest cheerleader. I am grateful he has lived to see me get married, and produce a grandson for him. I am reminded in times of crisis how we are all not just neighbors or political junkies, but we are also a family. Thank you and God bless you all.

(Editor's note: Dan's father, Michael Cohen, passed away on December 1, 2012)

LOST & FOUND

Eyeglasses, serving dishes and platters were left in the Hostel after the Holididay Party. To retrieve please contact Lauren at 212-678-8609.

Condolences

Sadly, club and board members suffered family loss over the past two months. Sincere condolences Mary Ann Marks who lost a grandson in October. Ellen Flax on the death of her father in November; and Dan Cohen on the passing of his father in December.



2013 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please pay your 2013 dues by filling out the form below and bringing it to the next meeting or by mailing it with your check to:

*Three Parks Independent Democrats
Cathedral Station P.O. Box 1316
New York, N.Y. 10025
Attn: Treasurer*

New Member___ Renewal___

Membership Category -- Check One

Individual (\$25) ___ Family -- two adults in the same household (\$40) ___ Low Income (\$15)___

Low Income Family (\$20) ___ Sponsor (\$50)___ Patron (\$100) ___

Name_____ Date_____

Address_____ Apt. #_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Phone (H)_____ (W)_____

Email_____

Check here if you prefer to receive the newsletter via email.

******Please pay your dues with a check or via PayPal – cash and money orders are far more difficult to process. Thanks in advance for your cooperation! Please make out all checks to “Three Parks Independent Democrats - Dues 2013”******

Three Parks Independent Democrats
Cathedral Station P.O. Box 1316
New York, N.Y. 10025

NEXT MEETING

JANUARY 9, 2013

8:00 PM

Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Avenue at 103rd Street