

## THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

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## CLUB MEETING, JANUARY 13, 2016

**TOPIC:** Role of the Department of Consumer Affairs and Q & A Session

Rezoning NYC: Taller Buildings for the Upper West Side?

**SPEAKERS:** Hon. Julie Menin, Commissioner, New York City Department of Consumer Affairs;  
Candidates for House of Representatives or their representatives (10<sup>th</sup> Congressional District)

**DATE:** Wednesday, January 13, 2016

**TIME:** 8:00 PM

**PLACE:** The Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Avenue at 103 St.

**ROOM:** Ballroom

### AGENDA

7:45 PM Sign-in

8:00 PM Call to Order

District Leader Reports

Speakers:

*Hon. Julie Menin, Commissioner, New York City  
Department of Consumer Affairs*

*Candidates for House of Representatives  
or their representatives (10<sup>th</sup> Congressional  
District)*

Rezoning NYC: Taller Buildings for the UWS?

Adjourn

### CALENDAR

**Wednesday, January 13, 2016, 8:00 pm**

Three Parks Membership meeting,  
The Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Avenue

**Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 8:00 pm**

Three Parks Board Meeting,  
The Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Avenue

**Membership Meetings:**

February 10, March 9, April 13, May 11, June 8

**Board Meetings:**

February 24, March 30, April 27, May 25, June 22

## **President's Report**

By Lauren Williams

Since our last program meeting in November when District 7 City Councilmember Mark Levine brought us an update on his and other Council activities, Three Parks members have been quite busy. We celebrated the end of 2015 with another wonderful Holiday Party that many have said was one of our best, and partygoers contributed \$750 to the efforts of the West Side Campaign Against Hunger. As always, we had a wonderful team of member volunteers who made our annual holiday gathering a success.

Our Board of Directors communicated with our elected officials in Washington, Albany, and locally on issues that included the pending decision on the closing of the Indian Point nuclear power plant (see the letter to Senator Schumer elsewhere in this newsletter), the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement, the proposed building of Port Ambrose (a liquefied natural gas [LNG] port), and the ongoing objections to the Jewish Home's high rise construction adjacent to PS 163 on West 97 Street. Along with attending Community Board meetings and rallies, members also registered voters and began campaigning for 2016 candidates at tabling events within our neighborhood. As December ended, members began seeking signatures on presidential candidate petitions and continued to volunteer for their campaigns.

For our first meeting of 2016, we will welcome Julie Menin, Commissioner of the City's Department of Consumer Affairs. She will inform us of the department's responsibilities and current initiatives. She will also respond to members' questions.

With four elections to be held in 2016, we will have important decisions to make and meetings devoted to candidates' speeches and endorsement votes. At our first meeting of the year, we will hear from candidates (or their representatives) for the 10th Congressional District in the House of Representatives and announce the slate for the Club's Board of Directors. In February, we will hear from candidates for the 13th Congressional District and hold the election for the Board of Directors. Please join Three Parks Independent Democrats or renew your membership so you qualify to vote in the upcoming months. You will find our membership form online at [www.threeparksdems.org](http://www.threeparksdems.org) or on page 7.

## **District Leader's Report**

By Bob Botfeld

Happy New Year! 2016 will be a busy and interesting year for Three Parks Independent Democrats. Congressmember

Rangel is retiring; therefore, for the first time in 40 years there is an open race for the Harlem congressional seat, the 13th Congressional District. At least eight candidates have announced to run in the Democratic primary. As club members, we have the opportunity to hear and get to know the congressional candidates at our club meetings and functions. With so many candidates, the victor could easily win by a hundred votes or less. Three Parks' endorsement and support will make a difference.

Also, because the state senators who represent our neighborhood, Adriano Espaillat and Bill Perkins, are both candidates for the 13th CD, it is very likely there will be competitive races for their 30th and 31st senate district seats. Three Parks and its members will play a pivotal role in determining who represents this district in Albany.

And yes, there is another contest this year—President of the United States. The gulf between the Democratic candidates and the Republican candidates, in both policy and thoughtfulness, has never been wider. The Republican candidates are simply frightening whether encouraging racism, attacks on women's rights, or simply denying science and climate change. While the presidential contest is not dependent upon Three Parks, nor do we have unique knowledge about presidential candidates that are in the news and discussed in the media 24/7, we want to engage as many of our neighbors in being active in supporting the Democratic candidate in November as we have always done every four years with great success.

## **Bike Lane Update**

The uselessness of the proposed Amsterdam Avenue bike lane was only highlighted by the presentation of the NYC Department of Transportation's (DOT) at the CB7 Transportation Committee meeting in November. By the DOT's own count, only 50 bicyclists per hour have been observed on the current Columbus Avenue bike path. On the other hand, over 1,600 cars per hour use Amsterdam Avenue and it is currently at over 90 per cent capacity. The DOT magically assumes that removing 25 per cent of the lanes will not cause total congestion on Amsterdam Avenue.

The DOT representative stated that the reduction in lanes could work because a significant percentage of the traffic, those using taxis, will convert to riding bicycles. By DOT count, taxis comprise nearly a quarter of the traffic or about 400 taxis per hour. To me it seemed unlikely that the people using taxis, elderly, couples, those with packages, etc, are likely to switch to bicycles. So I asked the DOT representative, in his estimation, how large is this "significant percentage" of taxi to bicycle conversion. At last he acknowledged that in their own estimate only about

eight of the 400 would convert to bicycle use. Those eight bicyclists must be very fat if removing them alone can compensate for 25 per cent of the automobile traffic.

In addition, in order to create the bike lane and provide access for deliveries, the DOT will need to convert all of the metered parking spaces on the east side of Amsterdam Avenue to commercial parking during the day and remove 25 per cent of the parking spaces on the west side. This will make the daily life very difficult for our diminishing middle class neighbors who need an automobile for their jobs out of city or for an inexpensive weekend escape.

If you agree that the bike path makes little sense, call Councilmembers Helen Rosenthal and Mark Levine to let them know how you feel.

## **TPID Holiday Party**

By Lorraine Zamora

Three Parks hosted its annual Holiday Party in the Youth Hostel Ballroom on Sunday, December 6. It was a lively and spirited evening, thanks to the 200+ guests, fabulous food, and the musical talents of DJ, Denise Jones.

District Leaders Cynthia Doty and Bob Botfeld welcomed everyone, including U.S. Senator Charles Schumer, Congressman Jerry Nadler, Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell, Council Member Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Comptroller Scott Stringer, assemblymember Keith Wright, former assemblymember Adam Clayton Powell III and a score of judges, district leaders, state committee members and candidates for office.

We owe the success of the evening to an army of TPID club members and friends: the expert leadership of Lauren Williams; the gorgeous decorations by Lynn Thomas; an outstanding array of food prepared by club members and coordinated by a dedicated team including Marie Lunn, Mary Ann Marks and Judy Wood—and the many behind the scenes people who made reminder calls, bought paper goods and poinsettias, put up and took down the decorations, tended the bar and provided the amazing variety of potluck dishes, sodas and wines. The evening included a request for donations to the West Side Campaign Against Hunger. \$750 cash was raised.

## **End of Year Outcry**

By Wendy Dannett

My outcry is about government deception, specifically the deception of government and private companies regarding crises in various parts of the country. I could talk about many issues, but I will address just one: a gas leak in Los Angeles that has created a catastrophic health crisis in the

community of Porter Ranch. In this situation, the state government and a powerful private company repeatedly lied about the crises and dragged their feet in dealing with it.

In the 2015 Christmas Day issue of the *Los Angeles Times*, there was a report that the Porter Ranch community of 30,000 had been affected by a gas leak that began October 23, 2015. The leak came from a well, run by the Southern California Gas Company, and had been releasing 1,200 tons of methane daily. That is equivalent to emissions from 160,000 cars per year, or burning of 90 million gallons of gas, according to California state regulators. They also said that the leaks account for 25 per cent of California's daily greenhouse gas emissions. Porter Ranch residents have been suffering from headaches and nosebleeds, and forced to evacuate.

Activist Erin Brockovich said this is the worst environmental disaster since the BP oil spill in 2010. But at first, Southern California gas said the emissions were from a gas leak in a house. When that proved untrue, the company said the gas emissions were harmless. It stated that they expected to have the leak (at least a half-mile below ground according to the *Los Angeles Daily News*) repaired in three to four months. But the Southland Regional Association of Realtors has advised that "there is no definitive time frame for controlling the gas leak."

Southern California Gas is a division of Sempra Energy, where Governor Jerry Brown's sister sits on the board. It has had an inadequate response to the leak, as has the governor. A report to the Public Utilities Commission last year found weakness in the gas well projects which could allow for problems to go undetected, according to the *Daily News*. And on "Democracy Now," they talked about how the SCGC removed safety valves 8,000 feet down and never replaced them. "That would have prevented this disaster," said Erin Brockovich.

In conclusion, I find this fracking situation upsetting. In addition to a lack of oversight from governmental and private companies, it is a slap in the face at a time when the world is focusing on slowing climate change.

## **Nominating Committee Report**

By Lauren Williams

The annual meeting and club elections will be held on Wednesday, February 10, 2016. The Nominating Committee of the Board of Directors has proposed the following list of candidates. Additional nominations can be made from the floor at the forthcoming January 13 meeting. Bios of all candidates will be included in the February newsletter. We thank departing member Ernestine Gallagher for her long-time contributions to the club and board and look forward to her continued

leadership and participation.

Lauren Williams, President

Nominating Daniele Gerard, First Vice President

Lynn Bender Max, Second Vice President

Ellen Flax, Treasurer

Jock Davenport, Recording Secretary

Lorraine Zamora, Corresponding Secretary

Theresa Canter, Membership Secretary

Wendy Dannett

Elizabeth Kellner

Erl Kimmich

Marie Lunn

Betsy Malcolm

Burce Markens

Mary Ann Marks

Steve Max

Merle McEldowney

Abigail McGloster

Milivoy Samurovich

Gerald Schultz

## Joining Three Parks

By Erl Kimmich

I joined Three Parks Independent Democrats because I was new to Manhattan Valley, having moved to West 102 Street in 2005. I wanted to learn more about my neighborhood and meet my neighbors on deeper levels than just meeting in the grocery store or post office. Also, I had been gone from New York City for more than a decade living in Tucson, Arizona. So I wanted to learn more about what was going on in New York.

I volunteered at the 2008 Obama storefront, organized and run by Three Parks Board members. There, I met a bunch of dynamic leaders including Lynn Max, Cynthia Doty, Daniele Gerard and Judy Wood. They assigned me various tasks supporting the campaign to elect Barack Obama. At some point, they suggested I attend some Three Parks meetings. I was impressed by the club's high level of organization and the caliber of the invited speakers. Also, the attendance at Three Parks meetings back then—like today—was always excellent, with sometimes over a hundred people filling the room. Elected officials come and speak as well as experts on a variety of issues. But most impressive is the membership and the board of Three Parks. Here are people dedicated to the basic principle of one person, one vote. Three Parks members are folks who work for change through discussion and debate. They are the voice of an informed electorate.

I learned that our neighborhood has among the highest, if not the highest, voter turnout in every election. I also learned that this is not by accident, but rather the result of hard work by the Three Parks board and membership:

Keeping issues in the public eye through running street tables and petitions.

Offering a deeper analysis and public debate on issues through monthly meetings.

Providing a forum for candidates vying for office and

those already elected to come and address voters and answer questions.

Reminding voters of election dates and polling places by placing hall cards in every building lobby in our district.

Publishing and distributing a monthly newsletter featuring updates from our county committee representatives and district leaders.

Engaging in letter-writing and phone-banking efforts to help guide our representatives' decision making and voting.

Campaigning for our member-endorsed candidates in the primaries and in general elections.

Maintaining an informative website complete with an archive of past newsletters and chronicling club endorsements and resolutions and the like.

In short, furthering the cultivation of an informed, vocal public.

I have found that I like working with people who hold as a core belief that taking positive action can and will make the neighborhood a better place. We need each other if we are going to move forward on the road to a greater realization of our human potential. And to overcome the failings that plague us such as: exorbitant rents; mass incarceration and unemployment; global warming; inequality of income based on gender and race; to name a few. Join Three Parks and help make a difference. You'll be glad you did!

## Interim Victory for PS 163 Families

By Elizabeth Kellner

Last spring, TPID awarded its Jesse Crawford Community Service Award to the Parents Association (PA) of PS 163 for its efforts in educating the community, government and elected officials about the risks of constructing a 20-story nursing home next to the school on West 97 Street. Along with a group of tenants from Park West Village, their court challenge met with partial success in December 2015. At that time, the Manhattan Supreme Court justice ruled that the Jewish Home Lifecare (JHL) must supplement the environmental review previously approved by the NYS Department of Health (DOH) to focus on the dangers of hazardous materials and noise.

JHL contends that regardless of the need for a supplemental review and approval by DOH, the project should be able to meet its timetable with construction set to begin in the Summer of 2016. JHL has not disclosed whether it intends to appeal or comply with the court's order requiring further review. The PA would like to see JHL abandon plans for the 97 Street site and instead renovate its aging and sprawling West 106 Street campus. Alternatively, the PA wants JHL to commit to substantial renovation of the PS 163 building to protect the children against noise and hazardous air quality. For now, JHL appears committed to



moving forward on 97 Street, which means the Manhattan Valley community will eventually have to contend with a private developer's plans—as yet unknown—for the 106 Street site.

Congratulations to PS 163 parents and pro bono attorney Rene Kathawala and their team of parents, health experts, environmental engineers and concerned neighbors who have supported their campaign. Whatever happens with the West 97 Street site, they have made a lasting contribution by educating government, elected officials and the community about the potential health and educational risks to our children.

## **Housing for Veterans on West 95 Street**

By Elizabeth Kellner

After years of community complaints, contentious meetings with city officials and accusations of NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) inspired insensitivity, the fate of the former shelter at 330 West 95 Street now seems headed for a resolution which is socially responsible and can achieve broad community support. In December, the City announced that it is establishing supportive housing for up to 135 formerly homeless veterans at the site. Well regarded nonprofit social service providers Bailey House and Harlem United will receive long-term contracts from the City's Human Resources Administration to operate the residence, provide a holistic array of supportive services, and make the necessary referrals and follow-ups to offsite medical, dental and substance abuse programs.

Neighborhood concerns date back to the final years of the Bloomberg administration when an expensive no-bid contract was awarded to a shelter operator with a history of problems. Without notice to the surrounding community, hundreds of homeless adults, many with serious and complex problems, suddenly became residents of West 95 Street with no on site access to the types of supportive services they needed. Reports of violence, crime, noisy street disturbances, aggressive panhandling and a myriad of other quality of life complaints ensued. The City reduced the resident population dramatically, and most recently 330 West 95 Street has been home to several dozen rent-regulated tenants who will remain once the veterans move in.

Some neighbors remain anxious, taking a wait and see attitude despite assurances from the City of thorough screening to ensure that no veterans with serious mental health or other issues will be referred to this program and that the nonprofits responsible for the site will provide the services and supervision needed by the residents. Hopefully, we can all agree that these veterans, who have fallen on hard times but have served our country well,

deserve to be welcomed to our community as they get the help they need to get their lives back on track.

## **Free the Buchanan Eleven!**

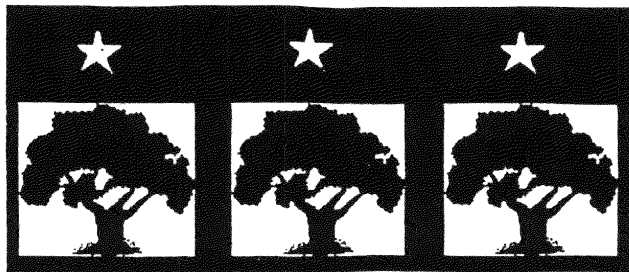
By Merle McEldowney

A board member is out on bail because eleven people tried to block access to the Indian Point power plant. I and ten others were arrested. The occasion was the expiration of the license on one of the two working reactors. The other license had already expired. So all of the energy that is supplied by that power plant is now illegal. If they knew you were operating a motor vehicle with an expired license, you might be arrested—just for driving a car. A nuclear power plant can keep operating after its license has expired: Will we arrest someone if there is an accident? There were originally three reactors. One had to be shut down. The license on one of the two remaining reactors expired in July and the other December 8. We were there to demonstrate and call attention to the operations of these unlicensed reactors

Since we refused to leave we were arrested. If you would like to get arrested, Buchanan, NY is the place to do it. I was prepared to be uncomfortable in the handcuffs. The handsome young (I suspect barely 30) police officer was very polite in his handcuffing of the people in this group (most of them easily old enough to have been his grandparents). When I asked him not to make the cuffs too tight, he obliged. After getting in the paddy wagon, I realized the cuffs were so loose I could have gotten out of them. I thought for a second of making a break and running for the train, but decided this was not the best thing to do (for I had no idea where the train station was). So The Buchanan Eleven was let out on bail. We will be returning to court on March 8.

At the demonstration, I was disappointed at how few people there were from the local community. Buchanan is on the Hudson River. According to Wikipedia, there are 814 households; 92 percent white; only 26 percent have children under 18; and only 60 percent are married couples. The median income for a household is \$62,000. Buchanan is also the smallest municipality *in the world* that has a nuclear power plant. Seems like a pretty safe place to build a power plant—not too many people to complain, and those that live there are pretty busy earning a living.

Stay tuned: March 8 is just three days before the anniversary of the Fukushima disaster. I hope all of you come to the lovely town of Buchanan to help us publicize the failure of the relicensing of the plant. I will let you know time and other details later.



## ***THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS***

Cathedral Station P.O. Box 1316 New York, N.Y. 10025 (212) 539-7602

**Website:** ThreeParksDems.org **Email:** ThreeParksDems@aol.com

December 21, 2015

Hon. Charles E. Schumer  
780 Third Avenue, Suite 2301  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Senator Schumer:

Thank you for joining Three Parks Independent Democrats at our holiday party on December 6th. It's always a pleasure to have you attend our yearly events. We are writing to follow up on our brief mention of the Indian Point nuclear power plant to ask you once again to call on the federal government to deny Entergy's application for license extensions.

You seemed visibly frustrated with Entergy due to the most recent incident at the plant on Saturday, December 5th. <http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2015/12/06/control-rod-power-loss-spurs-indian-point-reactor-shutdown/> We have also written to you about the May 9th fire that resulted in thousands of gallons of oil spilling onto the property and into the Hudson River. [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/11/nyregion/indian-point-plant-remains-offline-after-a-fire.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/11/nyregion/indian-point-plant-remains-offline-after-a-fire.html?_r=0)

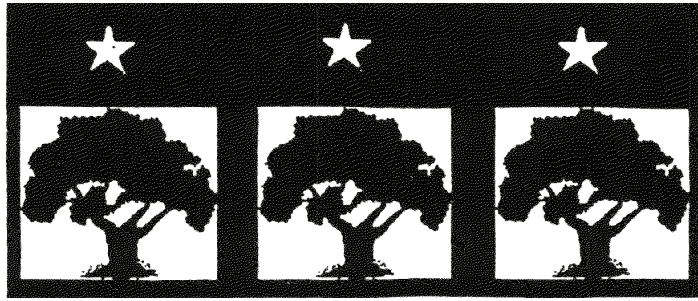
These incidents, in addition to all the reasons Three Parks has been advocating for Indian Point's closure since 2006, <http://www.threeparksdems.org/Indian/indian.html>, further underscore the plant's threat to hundreds of thousands and potentially millions of your constituents. In addition, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has approved a natural gas pipeline to be constructed right near the facility and the seismic fault discovered there. (Although you and Senator Gillibrand have called for a rehearing on FERC's determination, even when Indian Point is shut down, locating this pipeline here would still constitute sheer folly due, in part, to the 1500 tons of radioactive waste stored onsite at the plant.)

Over the past nine years, Three Parks has been advocating for the closure of Indian Point. Please join us by taking a public stance against Entergy's relicensing request.

Thank you,

Lauren Williams, President

Daniele Gerard and Steve Max, Co-chairs, Committee on Energy and the Environment



### Three Parks Independent Democrats

Cathedral Station P.O. Box 1316, New York, NY 10025, tel: 212-539-7602

Please pay your 2016 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

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#### 2016 MEMBERSHIP FORM

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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Please pay your dues with a check or via PayPal—cash and money orders are far more difficult to process.  
Please make out all checks to “Three Parks Independent Democrats—Dues 2016”

Thank you for your cooperation!

*Three Parks Independent Democrats*  
*Cathedral Station P. O. Box 1316*  
*New York, NY 10025*

Next Meeting

**Wednesday, January 13, 2016**

**Role of the Department of Consumer Affairs with Q & A Session**

**Rezoning NYC: Taller Buildings for the Upper West Side?**

**Speakers: Hon. Julie Menin, Commissioner, NYC Department of Consumer Affairs**

**Candidates for House of Representatives and their representatives (10th Congressional District)**