



THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

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Club Meeting, June 12, 2019, 8:00 pm

The Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Avenue at 103rd Street

Major Changes to the City's Charter

Speaker: Brad Lander, City Council Member, 39th District, Brooklyn

Fighting Overdevelopment on the Upper West Side

Speaker: Helen Rosenthal, City Council Member, 6th District, Manhattan

AGENDA

7:45 pm Sign In
8:00 pm Call to Order
District Leader
Speakers:
Brad Lander
Helen Rosenthal
Questions & Answers
Adjourn

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President's Report

By Lorraine Zamora

Every spring Three Parks holds its annual fundraising benefit to support the club's efforts to translate its progressive goals into concrete action. This year's event, held on April 28 at the Mexican Festival Restaurant, was one of our most successful in terms of income and attendees. How come?

More than ever, I believe club members need a place to be with their progressive peers, to be with those who believe in upholding similar values, and who are eager to work with our Democratic elected officials to reverse the political transgressions that have been going on in this country since the 2016 presidential election. Most of all, club members want to share their hopes that the 2020 election will be a turn-around success for the Democratic Party.

There were several highlights to the April occasion. First, we honored three outstanding individuals: State Senators Brian J. Benjamin and Robert Jackson, and Peter Arndsten of the Amsterdam Columbus Business Improvement District. Then we were honored to welcome U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer and Congressman Jerry Nadler, who assured us of their determined and continuing efforts to hold President Trump accountable, though both made clear that, at this time, there is no way to guarantee success. They thanked Three Parks for all we have done and continue to do to support their efforts. Congressman Nadler, chair of the House Judiciary Committee, thanked the club for its hard work to help win a Democratic House majority last November, adding "I hate to think where we'd be if that hadn't happened!" Videos of Schumer's and Nadler's remarks can be seen at www.threeparksdems.org.

At our May club meeting, State Senator Michael Gianaris provided a look-back at the defeat of Amazon's plan to build a second headquarters in Long Island City in return for huge tax breaks. Senator Gianaris was nominated to serve on the Public Authorities Control Board (which had to approve the Amazon plan) just in time to help derail the project. He emphasized the role that grassroots activists played in mobilizing opposition to the deal. He also reminded us that while Amazon negotiated with cities throughout the country, its talks in New York with Governor Cuomo and Mayor de Blasio were the only ones

held in secrecy—the only negotiation where local lawmakers and residents were purposefully left in the dark. "The lack of transparency was beyond me," Gianaris said, "and why should we have given scarce public resources to one of the richest companies on Earth?" He also pointed out that Amazon will inevitably bring operations to New York even without tax breaks "because this is where the talent is" and also because competitors like Google are already here.

Assembly Member Dick Gottfried also spoke at our May meeting. He is the longest-serving member of the NYS Assembly (nearly 50 years) and chair of its Health Committee. The status quo for healthcare is unacceptable, he said; federal threats to healthcare funding are dangerous to the public's health in New York. Over one million New Yorkers are currently uninsured, and millions more are underinsured. A proponent of single-payer healthcare, Gottfried explained that the proposed New York Health Act is the only way for ALL residents of New York to be guaranteed access to quality health services. Support for the New York Health Care Act is growing across the state, and Gottfried encouraged us to get involved. You can sign up with the Campaign for New York Health at www.nyhcampaign.org.

District Leader Report: 2019 Petitioning

By Bob Botfeld

"Sign for me." Again, it worked. This year, the only names on the ballot were the Three Parks candidates for district leader, county committee, judicial delegates, and judges. There were no public officials to headline the petition. But guess what? Our neighbors were equally willing to sign for our hardworking club members, who every year make this neighborhood the friendly, lively political community known throughout New York City.

Due to the large turnout in the 2018 midterm elections, we were allotted 30 additional county committee positions to fill and qualify about 100 county committee positions in 40 election districts. We qualified 39 of our 40 election districts. Sixty-seven members and friends of Three Parks participated this year, collecting over 2000 signatures. In the eastern part of our district bordering Central Park, the leading petition gatherers were the team of Audrey Isaacs and Norm Lafond, collecting 167 and 161 signatures, respectively. In the western part of our area we

were again led by the unsurpassable Mary Ann Marks who witnessed 118 signatures.

New board member Miriam Rabban tried her petitioning talents in a difficult election district and surprisingly collected 68 signatures. District Leader Bob Botfeld collected 59. New county committee member Elaine Hazzard cruised to 52 signatures, a cakewalk for her after collecting over 350 signatures last year for Teachout and Nixon. Chuck Wall, temporarily retired from helping lead our Take Back the House efforts, had time to gather 50 while helping distribute the petitions.

Another new county committee member, Penelope Laitin, used her recreational therapeutic skill to entice 45 to sign. Corinne Constantine took time off from her fundraising duties and, helped by her dog Pepper, added a meaningful 43. Similarly, 43 was the total for Sharon Anne Johnson, who collected Cheers-style—all from her building where everyone knew her name.

National organizer Jeffrey Blum, a welcome addition to our county committee, quickly collected 42 in the 45th ED, which also helped qualify perennial petitioners Doris Schreiber and Jane Thompson, who could not petition as they both were rehabilitating from injuries. Welcome back from Amsterdam House, Doris and Jane.

Always organized Lynn Max, software expert and bartender Alexander Medwedew, and former contextual zoning maven Micki Picinich amassed 30 or more signatures each. Newcomer Audrey Wu admitted to collecting exactly 30 along with Ilene Pfeiffer, Bruce Markens, Jock Davenport, Lorraine Zamora, and Paul Bifani. Steve Max distributed the petitions and added 30 signatures, too.

Marie Lunn, Daniele Gerard, Lisa Di Caprio, Betsy Malcolm, Hanna Leider, Susan Maderer, Alan Flacks, Russell Jenkins, Margaret Beels, Raven Brown, Irene Shrier, Lynn Thomas, David Lazarus, and Stephanie Tegnazian filled the signature pot with 20 or more.

Our teen count petitioners were Arlene Geiger, Genora Bennett, George Voorhis, Judy Hummel, Dan Cohen, George Mc Guinness, Judy Wood, Marie Lokshin, Paul Froehlich, Robert Bardin, Sam Lazarus, Wendy Dannett, Ellen Flax, Jessica Habersstock, Cynthia Doty, and Michael Stearns.

Rounding out the qualifying petitioners were these spirited contributors: Noah Gotbaum, Brenda

Morgan, Elizabeth Kellner, Susan Meyer, Joan Ogden, Madelyn Innocent, Merle McEldowney, Daniel Tsadok, Jacob Gross, Rochelle Holland Stearns, Mimi Daitz and Erl Kimmich.

A great job and congratulations and thanks to all!

State Committee Report

By Daniel Marks Cohen

On May 22, the Democratic State Committee unanimously passed a resolution supporting voting reform to take effect before the New York State Democratic presidential primary on April 28, 2020. The state legislature has to act on this resolution, but considering the overwhelming support in the state party, they should approve it. It would allow an independent voter (as in, not registered with ANY party) to register as a Democrat up to 25 days before a primary election. Voters registered with other parties will be allowed to switch their party affiliation to Democrat up to 60 days before the primary. The Democratic National Committee rewards states with delegates in the presidential primary if the state party improves voter access, so this action helps New York by awarding it the second highest number of delegates at the Democratic convention, after California. This represents an improvement for New York State, now practically dead last in the nation with its current voter registration laws. The legislature may add a rule specifying that once a voter registers as a Democrat before a presidential primary, that voter cannot switch his or her party affiliation for a certain period of time, to discourage non-Democrats from changing parties to impact the choice of Democratic candidate for President.

A Democratic Leader for the Millennials

By Jessica Habersstock

As a millennial, I often get asked how we can get other young people to become involved in politics, and why so many seem disengaged from the political system. For a while I've been repeating what pundits and "experts" have told me is true. However, over the last six months I've been reflecting more and more on the issues specifically facing millennials. For my generation, the recent climate crisis estimates have threatened our whole future. Gun violence became an integral part of our education system; in just one recent week, there were two school shootings where students used their own bodies as shields to protect their

fellow students. Millennials are also experiencing unprecedented student debt, on top of increasing rent and healthcare costs. If I'm being honest, this is all incredibly overwhelming. It's hard to know where to start, let alone get your feet on the ground. In addition, our government has consistently failed us in solving these problems. Many past efforts have seemed like they've been for naught. In some ways, I think millennials have begun to lose hope.

However, in the past year or so I have seen a fire burning in some of my friends and colleagues that I never knew existed. New leaders like Katie Porter, Alessandra Biaggi, Stacey Abrams and, yes, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez have shown a new and different type of leadership. They've been unapologetically themselves, remaining honest and open about their personal struggles. They've spoken about the issues they truly care about, some of which mainstream politicians have been afraid to discuss. They haven't backed down from a fight. And, in turn, their passion and new approach have engaged people, especially millennials, who have otherwise been disheartened by our political system and government for a long time.

So why aren't these newly engaged folks fully jumping on the Democratic boat? The answer is that these new Democrats don't represent the larger Party establishment. The people now speaking for the Democratic Party come from a generation with an entirely different set of priorities and methodology for solving problems. Some even shut down these new leaders and the aggressive approach they're taking to solve the problems affecting my generation's future, saying "you need to wait your turn" or "that's not how we do things." However, when it comes to problems like climate change and gun violence, every second counts. A life could be lost, and our moment to help change the direction of the future could pass.

As we move into this next election cycle, I urge you to look at each candidate with a slightly different perspective. Who is going to truly fight to ensure our planet still remains habitable for future generations? Who is not afraid to change the approach to solving a problem? Who is going to listen to and work with new, bold ideas from new leaders in the Party? As millennials become the largest voting demographic, we need leaders who will inspire them to become engaged and invested in the Democratic Party, and choosing those leaders starts now.

Sergei Magnitsky, Bill Browder, & Russian Corruption, Part II

By Elaine M. Hazzard

(Continued from the May newsletter) Sergei Magnitsky, a Russian tax lawyer, was employed by London-based businessman Bill Browder to investigate tax fraud and organized crime influence inside the Russian government. The Russian government jailed Magnitsky on trumped-up charges and tortured him.

In 2009, Sergei's torture becomes his murder, aged 37. Bill vows to seek punishment for those responsible. Russian mobsters love to travel to spend their money in the West. Cutting their access to travel and their use of Western banks and financial accounts offers some punitive, targeted response to their crimes, and public exposure from which mafia hide. Browder drafts a list of 60 Russian officials involved in the tax fraud and in Sergei's death. Bill seeks help from the United States. Senator Ben Cardin takes up the cause, asking then Secretary Hillary Clinton to invoke visa sanctions against the 60. With Senator John McCain also on board, the Magnitsky Act is passed in 2012, sanctioning Russian individuals for their wrongful acts.

Putin retaliates for the Magnitsky Act via restrictions against U.S. adoption of Russian orphans. Now orphans were being cynically used as a political tool. Recall that the June 2016 Trump Tower meeting between members of the Trump Campaign and Russian officials to discuss the use of stolen emails to help steal a U.S. election was supposedly about "Russian adoptions." The same vicious cynicism with which Putin waives away the future of Russian children swivels to an attack on the American democratic process itself.

Putin also brings groundless charges against Bill Browder. In the ultimate case of projection, Russia tries Mr. Browder in absentia for theft of the very tax payments made by Hermitage to the tax bureau that were stolen by corrupt Russian officials. This "conviction" was created to request an Interpol Red Notice. Red Notices have been repeatedly created and though eventually removed, these have interfered with Mr. Browder's ability to travel without fear of false arrests. So far, though he has been stopped and held, judicial processes have prevented his extradition to Russia, but his safety is not assured given the leanings and alliances of leaders in some countries. And Putin launches

a bizarre stunt, putting the deceased Magnitsky on "trial" in March 2013 for propaganda, the prosecutor televised addressing an empty cage.

As Bill Browder continues to seek justice for Sergei, new and expansive versions of the Magnitsky Act appear around the world, defying Putin and organized crime.

Voting Reform in NY State: Legislation Passed and Additional Proposals

By Miriam Rabban

Now that there are Democratic majorities in both houses of the NY State legislature, important voting reforms passed in this legislative session. Let NY Vote and other advocacy groups have played an active role in pushing for voting reform. The group's website letnyvote.org has information about the legislation that passed, priorities for the future, and how to take action. It provides an easy way to contact legislators and offers sample letters. This article draws from information on that website.

Let NY Vote has three remaining priorities:

Enacting legislation to provide voting rights for people on parole (A4987/S1931). Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell (District 69) is the prime sponsor of A4987.

Automatic voter registration, which would expand voter registration at government agencies beyond the DMV and make registration automatic, with people given the choice to opt out.

Shortening the time before an election for party enrollment, both for people not affiliated with a party and for people who wish to change party enrollment. New York State has a closed primary system in which people may only vote in the primary of the party in which they are enrolled. An argument against shortening the time for changing parties is that people not committed to a party could enroll to influence primaries, such as to select weak candidates.

Voting reform measures that passed include:

Early Voting for November 2019: New York will have 9 days of early voting before every election, ending the Sunday before the election. This makes it easier to find a good time to vote.

Consolidated primaries: Already in effect, this measure establishes one primary date for each election cycle instead of two, making voting in the primaries easier and reducing costs.

Pre-registration of 16- and 17-year-olds:

Starting January 1, 2020, teens 16 or older may preregister to vote and the Board of Elections will automatically register them when they turn 18. This should make it easier for young adults to become engaged in voting.

Registration portability: Starting March 25, 2019, the Board of Elections will automatically update the registration of voters who move within NY State if they fill out a change of address with USPS, allowing those New Yorkers to vote at their new address without having to re-register.

On-line voter registration: Starting in 2021, New Yorkers will be able to register to vote online through the State Board of Elections website. This measure allows all New Yorkers the option to register online, not just those who have a driver's license and register to vote through an online DMV portal.

A Climate Solution? Regenerative Organic Agriculture

By Daniel Tsadok

According to various estimates, the global food system is responsible for somewhere between 24% and 57% of global greenhouse gas emissions especially when taking fertilizer manufacture, refrigeration, packaging, and transport into account, as well as deforestation. It is essential, then, to put agriculture at the center of any serious discussion about climate change.

Regenerative Organic Agriculture (a term coined by the Rodale Institute) is one way to think more constructively about agriculture. It re-imagines the farm, including its soil, as an ecosystem and carbon sink, as opposed to a carbon source. It consists of a number of specific agricultural practices: cover crops, crop rotations, composting, avoiding pesticides, avoiding nitrogen-based fertilizers, and avoiding soil tillage. Combined, these practices result in reduced emissions, and in healthier soil that sequesters carbon from the atmosphere and into the soil, primarily in the form of plants, making farms carbon-negative.

How effective might this approach be? According to the Rodale Institute, "if we converted all global croplands and pastures to regenerative organic agriculture, we could sequester more than 100% of current annual CO₂ emissions." Drawdown.org calculates that an increase from the currently 108 million acres of regenerative agricultural land

globally to 1 billion acres "could result in a total reduction of 23.2 gigatons of carbon dioxide, from both sequestration and reduced emissions" by 2050. Drawdown further estimates that "regenerative agriculture could provide a \$1.9 trillion financial return by 2050 on an investment of \$57 billion."

There are many additional benefits as well: Regenerative Organic Agriculture can help reduce pollution, runoff, and erosion, increase biodiversity, and improve drought resistance, since healthier soil retains water better. And one the nicest benefits is healthier, tastier food.

Farmers are in a unique position to help drastically improve the environment. As discussions of a possible Green New Deal proceed, it is important to include agriculture as a central contributor to both the problem and the potential solution.

It is also important to note that forests are far superior at sequestering carbon than even the best-managed farms. Deforestation for agriculture and pasture is one of the leading causes of climate change.

Fighting Monsanto's Roundup

By Wendy Dannett

The story of Monsanto's Roundup weed killer is much like the story of the Boeing 747 Max 8: a tale of collusion between government and big business to the detriment of human life and the environment. Monsanto first began marketing Roundup in 1974. The weed killer's principal ingredient is a chemical called glyphosate. Though a study showed that mice exposed to Roundup developed kidney adenomas, the EPA (which in 1985 had classified glyphosate as having carcinogen potential) changed the classification in 1991 to "evidence of non-carcinogenicity for humans" with input from a Monsanto doctor, George Levinkas.

To enable farmers to use glyphosate on a large scale, starting in 1996, certain crops, including soybeans, corn, cotton, sugar beets, and wheat, were genetically engineered to make them glyphosate-tolerant. Farmers could spray these "Roundup Ready Crops" with glyphosate and kill only weeds, leaving the crops alive. At first, only small quantities of Roundup Ready Crops were produced, but by 2007 production had doubled, and by 2014 usage had boomed. This was despite the fact that in 2012 rats fed Roundup-tolerant maize or water suffered liver and kidney damage. Moms Across America (MAA), a grassroots organization promoting safe,

healthy food, says that since the 1980s, studies have shown that at high levels, glyphosate can cause birth defects, strip crops of micronutrients, and increase the risk of non-Hodgkins lymphoma.

In 2015, the World Health Organization announced that glyphosate was probably carcinogenic to humans. Bayer, which purchased Roundup from Monsanto in 2017, responded that regulatory authorities throughout the world had reaffirmed that glyphosate was safe. Early in 2015, the EPA and Monsanto worked in concert to stall a toxicology review on glyphosate. A toxicology review made sense as glyphosate was widely used on farms, residential lawns, gardens, school playgrounds and golf courses. But the review was put on hold, and to date has not been published. Documents show a persistent effort by officials in the EPA to slow the review of glyphosate, at the behest of Monsanto. By 2017, internal Monsanto and EPA communications showed a growing number of Roundup cancer cases and the reality of a 30-year cover-up, lasting through eight different presidencies.

Due to the extensive use of glyphosate, residues have been found in human urine, as well as in ground water, air and soil. A study conducted by Moms Across America found high glyphosate levels in 30% of breast milk samples from American women. That is 10 times higher than the amount found in European mothers. But these high levels are still below the level defined as safe by the EPA, which is 7000 times higher than the safety rate in Europe. Because of this MAA study, there is the concern that glyphosate may be accumulating in human body fat and tissue. The EPA denies this claim and says that glyphosate is biodegradable. But if it were biodegradable, it would not be found in our ground and water.

Despite Bayer's insistence that glyphosate is safe, there have been lawsuits throughout the country fighting Monsanto and Bayer. Primarily, they are from people who have contracted non-Hodgkins lymphoma. And people are winning. "Juries informed by independent science have repeatedly rejected the Monsanto-promoted myth that glyphosate poses no health risks," stated Nathan Donley of the Center for Biological Diversity. A recent article by Patricia Cohen of *The New York Times* cites a Jury in Oakland, California, awarding a couple with non-Hodgkins lymphoma \$2 billion on May 8, 2019. They had been using Roundup

on their property for decades. In August 2018, a San Francisco Superior Court awarded \$289 million in damages to a former groundskeeper, Dwayne Leewho, who may die from non-Hodgkins lymphoma. In March 2019, a jury awarded more than \$78 million to Edwin Hardeman, a Sonoma County homeowner who went to court over the cancer he believed he got from the weed killer. He said, "It's a product that is so widely used. It's in all the home building stores. There's no warning label." Michelle Cook of the activist social networking site Care2 thinks the EPA allows corporations to run roughshod for "cold, hard cash." She feels it is time the EPA was held accountable. I agree.

Thanks to Benefactors, Patrons & Sponsors of Our April 28 Benefit

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TPID Annual Picnic Wednesday, July 24, 5:30-8:00 pm

Please put July 24 on your calendar! Our 16th Annual Potluck Picnic will be in Central Park, on the lawn just inside the entrance at 103rd Street and Central Park West. Since there are no club meetings in July and August, it's the perfect opportunity for club members to share a lovely evening in the park, schmoozing with friends and elected officials.

We will be mailing a postcard invitation, sending email blasts and an Evite. At our June 12 club meeting, we will have a sign-up sheet for volunteers. As always, we ask you to bring a dish to share with your fellow members.

See you on July 24!

Check Out the New Features on Our Website!

Nadler and Schumer Videos. Now you can see videos of the remarks by Rep. Jerry Nadler and Sen. Charles Schumer at our April 28 benefit. Just go to threeparksdems.org and click on the links.

The Latest Presidential Polls. Our website now also offers the latest Presidential polling data. On the home page, click the link "2020 Polling Data" as shown below.

You will be taken right to the most useful site that tracks all 2020 polls. You'll see the latest data on:

How the Democratic candidates rate both nationally and in state primaries;

How each candidate would fare head-to-head against Trump;

Average poll ratings over time for each candidate

The site is maintained by Real Clear Politics. The data are updated daily, so check back regularly to see how all the candidates are currently polling.



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Next Meeting: June 12, 2019

Major Changes to the City's Charter

Brad Lander

City Council Member, 39th District

Fighting Overdevelopment on the Upper West Side

Helen Rosenthal

City Council Member, 6th District

Upcoming Meetings

Wednesday, June 26, 7:00 pm

Three Parks Board Meeting

Wednesday, July 24, 5:30-8:00 pm

Annual Three Parks Picnic

103rd Street & Central Park West

Wednesday, August 28, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Board Meeting

Wednesday, September 11, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Club Meeting

Wednesday, September 25, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Board Meeting