

THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

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March 13, 2013

FEATURED TOPIC & SPEAKERS:

Presentations by candidates for New York City Public Advocate and for Manhattan Borough President

DATE: WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13

TIME: 8:00 PM

PLACE: The Youth Hostel
891 Amsterdam Avenue at 103rd Street

ROOM: Chapel/Ballroom

AGENDA

7:45 PM Sign-in
8 PM Call to Order

1. President's Report & Announcements
2. District Leaders' Reports
3. Nominations for Judicial Delegates
4. Adjournment

CALENDAR

Wednesday, March 27, 2013
Three Parks Board Meeting, 8 PM
Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103rd St.

Wednesday, April 10, 2013
Three Parks Meeting, 8 PM
Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103rd St.
MAYORAL CANDIDATES FORUM

Wednesday, April 24, 2013
Three Parks Board Meeting, 8pm
Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. @ 103d St.

Sunday, April 28, 2013
Annual Fundraiser
Café Frida, 768 Amsterdam Ave. 1pm to 4pm

President's Column

By Elizabeth Kellner

As we begin what promises to be a robust 2013 municipal campaign season, as well as sequestration and state and city budget negotiations, in my first column I want to focus your attention on New York City's children -- our pride, our shame and our responsibility. We have had the State of the Union, State of the State, State of the City and State of the Borough, and so we should be equally concerned about the State of Our Children. For the last 20 years the Citizens' Committee for Children of New York ("CCC") has compiled a bi-annual report entitled "Keeping Track of New York City's Children". The 2013 edition was just released. It is voluminous and comprehensive, rich with enlightening publicly available data and can be accessed on line via CCC's website. In addition to city-wide data on economic conditions, housing and community life, health, education, youth services and safety issues affecting children, all this information is also broken down by ethnicity, borough and community board. Here are some highlights for your consideration which I hope will better inform your evaluation of candidates and opinions on budget priorities.

Over 1.7 million children live in NYC. By ethnicity, our children are 35.5% Latino, 24.8% White, 25% Black and 11.1% Asian. Only 52.8% of children live with two parents and 26.6% live with single mothers. The child poverty rate has increased from 26.5% to 29.8% in the last five years. One in every three NYC children live in poverty. In large swaths of East Harlem, the Bronx and Brooklyn that percentage rises to 40%. CB#7 has a 10-20% poverty rate, but in CB#9, just to our north and with whom many of us will soon share the new 7th City Council District, the child poverty rate is 20-30%.

The "rent burden", or percentage of households spending one half or more of their income on rent, has risen significantly in every borough except Staten Island. In the Bronx, it's 34.3%, Brooklyn, 30.1%, Manhattan, 23.5%, Queens, 30.7%. This leaves very little money for food, household supplies, clothing, child care, education, transportation, health care and everything else we all need and use that is not a roof over our heads. One in 50 children in NYC has slept in a shelter this year -- 56% of them are Black, 37% Latino, 2% White, 1% Asian and 4% other. On the Upper West Side 53.5% of the rental units are considered "luxury", with a rent of \$2000 or more per month.

A few highlights on health care stand out as well. The percentage of pregnant women receiving late or no prenatal care has risen from 5.7% in 2007 to 7.2% in 2010. For Black and Latino mothers those rates are even higher -- 12.1% and 8.0% respectively. In 2011 NYC childhood immunization rates remain below national levels -- 73.3% in the US, but only 66.4% in NYC. In 2011, 23% of NYC high school

students citywide had been diagnosed with asthma. Homicide remains the overwhelmingly largest cause of death for children aged 15-19 accounting for 89 of the 136 deaths in this age group in 2010. The CCC data also demonstrates that without the government programs Medicaid and Child Health Plus, hundreds of thousands of NYC children would have no access to affordable health care. Huge ethnic disparities remain in infant mortality, obesity rates, access to fresh food, availability of mental health services and other indicators of well being and quality of life in the communities where NYC's children live.

In a future column I hope to talk more about early childhood needs, education and youth services, but for now, I urge you to think about these indicators, and by all means, visit CCC's website (www.cccnewyork.org) and access the Keeping Track database. As progressive Democrats, we have a responsibility to educate our fellow citizens and candidates for elected office about what is most important to the future of our city. We must hold ourselves and them accountable when we fall short. CCC's mission is to ensure that every child is healthy, housed, educated and safe. It should be ours as well.

District Leader Report

By Bob Botfeld

Luxury Housing Planned to Replace the Lawns and Open Space of Frederick Douglass Houses

In the past few weeks rumors have been confirmed that the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), the landlord for 5,000 residents in Three Parks' neighborhood, is planning to replace the lawns and other open space of Douglass Houses with luxury housing. The buildings, potentially 32 storey towers, have been projected to be built on the south side of 104th street between Columbus Avenue and Amsterdam Avenue and also abutting Columbus Avenue near 102nd street. NYCHA claims that the open space must be used in order to raise sufficient revenue to fund the current maintenance of the Douglass Houses apartments.

On January 28 in the community room of Douglass Houses, I attended with Three Parks' members Lynn Thomas, Cynthia Doty and Jane Wisdom, an excellent lecture on the history of public housing and NYCHA given by Victor Bach of the Community Services Society. Bach explained that the shortfall of funds for Douglass Houses and other NYCHA apartment complexes has occurred because subsidies for public housing have been consistently reduced over the past few decades. Previously, Douglass Houses was funded by the city (22%), state (37%), and federal (41%) resources. Today, Douglass Houses receives no funds from either the city or state. More startling was that during the Mayor Giuliani administration, when NYCHA was already no longer receiving any city or state funds, Giuliani diverted an

additional \$75 million a year from the federal subsidy for public housing to the city's general funds to pay for the city's police protection within public housing. As Bach explained, the same police protection that the rest of NYC residents in private housing receive for free, the tenants of public housing must pay for, i.e. they lost and continue to lose \$75 million dollars annually from their federal subsidy which should be used to pay for the upkeep of the public housing apartments.

At the public housing lecture, which was sponsored by the Park West Neighborhood History Group and the Columbus Amsterdam BID, a panel of long-time residents described an earlier, almost idyllic, time in Douglass Houses. Douglass Houses, completed in 1958, in its first few decades before the drug epidemic was a coveted residence with good maintenance, wonderful city views, a vibrant community center, and a close and safe community where the neighbors supported and watched out for each other. Today Douglass Houses, while safer than during the drug epidemic of the 70's and 80's, has a long backlog of maintenance repairs. NYCHA has over 400,000 open repair orders. Residents described elevators that have not worked in months and weeks without hot water. Jane Wisdom, one of the panelists and president of the Douglass Houses Residents Association as well as a board member of Three Parks Independent Democrats, runs the monthly Residents Association meetings and described the extensive maintenance issues brought up at the monthly meetings.

The planned luxury housing development towers is a threat to the open space and playgrounds of Douglass Houses and an overwhelming presence in the blocks abutting Douglass Houses. NYCHA has not yet officially distributed plans for the new buildings. However, they have already scheduled a meeting for tenants on March 23. Local elected officials, including Assembly Member O'Donnell, State Senator Perkins, Councilmember Melissa Mark-Viverito, and Borough President Scott Stringer, sent a letter to NYCHA criticizing the agency for lack of transparency and engagement of the residents in the NYCHA developments.

NYCHA owns the land which they want to sell. However, any development of the land requires both HUD approval and the approval of the local elected authority (most likely the mayor). There is a public review and comment process mandated by the 1937 Land Use law governing the disposition, i.e. development, of any public housing project. Among Three Parks Independent Democrats' membership and board members are many Douglass Houses residents and neighbors. We are, and need to be, involved as we learn more about what the residents want done and what can be done to change or stop the possible damage to or destruction of the Douglass Houses and Manhattan Valley living environment.

Final Council Lines

The new council lines for the Three Parks' area were released with major changes for our council district lines compared to the previous decade and also from the previously released plans. The very good news is that the redistricting commission listened to our request for a single representative for Manhattan Valley and only two representatives for the whole 96th to 110th street west side neighborhood. Our neighborhood will now be in two new council districts: the blocks east of Broadway to Central Park West from 96th to 110th street will be in the 7th Council District. The blocks west of Broadway and Riverside Park will be in the 6th Council District now very ably represented by Councilmember Gale Brewer. Unfortunately, we will lose current Councilmembers, Melissa Mark-Viverito of the 8th Council District and Inez Dickens of the 9th Council District. They have been terrific representatives for our district over the past eight years and have served and protected through their support of two unique and excellent zoning bills and their services to their constituents.

15th Annual Riverside Poetry Event

SUNDAY APRIL 28TH

Beginning at 2:00PM...

Riverside Dr., on the island at 103rd St.

Rain Location: 310 Riverside Dr.

@103rd Street

COME READ LISTEN ENJOY!

Questions? Call 212-865-6118, Mildred Speiser

lspeis@gmail.com

Inspiration from the DC Rally for Climate Change

By Wendy Dannett, Edited by Jacob Dannett

On Sunday, February 17, thousands rallied near the Washington Monument to protest the XL pipeline and call for more stringent steps to fight emissions of climate-changing gases. Groups opposing coal production, nuclear power and hydraulic fracturing were prominent. There were people from across the country, and all ages.

Environmentalists have singled out the pipeline because it would carry tar sands oil from Canada, which is dirtier than other forms of oil production and releases more CO₂. The State Department had appeared ready to approve the pipeline in 2011, but Mr. Obama delayed a decision because of his concern that the route passed through vulnerable

Nebraska grasslands. However, the pipeline company, TransCanada, submitted a revised route, and the governor of Nebraska approved the plan last month, sending the final decision to Washington.

I was surprised how exciting the rally felt. I think it was in part because there was such a large crowd: estimates were of over 40,000 people; and also because there were a lot of people under thirty. In my experience, usually about 50% of the people are over 50; this time, it seemed only 10%. It truly felt that we were passing the baton to the next generation for the future fight. The significance of the demonstration was highlighted by the speakers. One speaker, the Rev. Lennox Yearwood, compared the rally to Martin Luther King's march on Washington for Civil Rights, but said "while they were fighting for equality, we are fighting for existence."

In keeping with the sense of importance this demonstration had, the signs were unusual and dynamic. There was a homemade "pipe" at least 10 feet long, which read "say no to Keystone". There was a puppet of the statue of liberty with the sign "it is not easy to be green, but we must". There were signs reading "no more profits for the few". There was a sign by Missourians for Safe Energy reading "abundant solar = lots of jobs; keep tar sands in the ground". There were energized chants such as "we are the people, we have the power; no mountain top removal".

To this point, Obama has not proven himself as a strong advocate for the environment. The decision on the pipeline is a crucial test. In that regard, it is important that the protests against the pipeline and non-renewal energy appear to be growing. I feel the pressure needs to increase, and the rally on the 17th did just that. On 2/13, several days before the rally, about 50 protesters were arrested at the White House, in an act of civil disobedience. Among those arrested was Mr. Brune of the Sierra Club. That was the first time in 120 years that the Sierra Club engaged in civil disobedience. Further, an organizer at 350.org said "what was so impressive about the Forward on Climate (the Washington rally) wasn't just that there were so many people there – it's that there were so many leaders."

What comes next? According to 350.org, apparently a lot of work is underway. The weekend of 2/24, students from over 80 schools met in Philadelphia to discuss the growing movement to divest from fossil fuels. Religious groups and pension funds are being targeted for divestment as well. There are also projects to ramp up civil disobedience, and globally, to create climate networks. In June, there will be a meeting in Istanbul. This issue is our life and future. It felt important to be part of the movement and part of the rally on the 17th. We must work to continue the momentum.

Fracking Delayed; Possible Moratorium?

By Daniele Gerard and Merle McEldowney

In the battle to stop fracking in New York State, February may have been the best month. On February 26th, Assembly Member Sweeney introduced a bill that will place a one-year moratorium on fracking. Because of the sponsorship of Speaker Silver and at least 45 others, including Assembly Member O'Donnell, this bill has a chance to become law.

Governor Cuomo missed a February 13th deadline to release the environmental impact statement (EIS) that would form the basis for new drilling rules. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) missed a February 27th deadline for issuing regulations. That means fracking cannot go forward until there are new public hearings.

The EIS was held up in February after Dr. Nirvan Shah, Commissioner of the NYS Department of Health, requested more time to complete a health impact study before the Governor makes any decision on drilling.

Three Parks and our friends and allies in the anti-fracking community welcome the delay and the possible moratorium. Not everyone is as pleased as we are, however. The Joint Landowners Coalition, an upstate pro-fracking group, is planning to sue the DEC over the delay. Joe Martens, the DEC commissioner, reportedly said New York could issue fracking permits if the DOH study sufficiently addresses concerns about risks to the water supply and other environmental hazards. Even if the State granted permits for drilling, more than 150 New York cities and towns have their own fracking bans, which are already prompting lawsuits. Environmental groups will file lawsuits if permits to drill in New York State are granted.

Any delay in fracking is a good thing and a moratorium even better, but an outright ban is vastly preferable to both. Then maybe Albany could consider taking steps to make New York the nation's capital for wind turbine and solar panel construction instead of encouraging further reliance on fossil fuels.

Another Charter School Co-Location Problem in District 3?

By Bruce Markens

On February 19th, the Success Academy Charter Schools brought before the Youth, Education and Libraries Committee of Community Board 7 a request to support its application for a new Success Academy School in District 3 for the 2014-15 school year. The spokesperson for Success was a parent at Upper West Side Success Academy co-located (despite community objections) in the Brandeis High School building. He did not specify where such a school would be located within District 3 and could not identify what space in the District could possibly support a proposed school with a projected student population of 600 to 675

pupils.

Under present rules, a proposal for a new charter school in New York State need only identify what school district the planned school will be in without specifying where the school will be housed. In practice, this has regularly resulted in New York City charter schools being co-located in existing public school buildings. This was true with respect to the West Side Success Academy co-locating in the Brandeis building and with other charter school networks that have been given valuable space in existing public school buildings. Co-location has created problems in both District 3 and throughout the city. As was suggested by CEC 3 President Christine Annechino at the CB 7 meeting when charter schools co-locate with existing public schools such as happened in P.S. 149 in Harlem, the charter school winds up with spruced up classrooms and state of the art technology that contrasts with the public school housed in the same building. Much of this disparity, it should be noted, is a result of money poured into charters by their corporate backers.

Community Board 7 members were quite skeptical of plans for another Success Charter in District 3. In the past Success Academy and other charters have sought space within existing public school buildings that has been designated as "underutilized." CB7 members questioned whether "underutilization" as defined by the Department of Education was even a valid measure of existing space within school buildings. Moreover, even using the DOE measure only 2 buildings-- P.S. 208 at 112th Street and the Martin Luther King Jr. Complex on 65th Street-- have very limited space, but nowhere near the space to ultimately provide for a projected new school of 600 to 675 pupils. The CB7 Committee concluded that Success Academy not seek space within District 3 public school buildings, and suggested that space might be available at sites scheduled for closing within the Catholic school system such as Holy Name School on 96th Street.

Hurricane Sandy Update

From Rosemary McGinn

Last month I had the pleasure of telling some of my "Sandy story" at the January meeting. This is an update.

I live with and care for my 88-year-old mother in Breezy Point, Queens, a tight-knit community of about 2,500 families hit hard by the storm. All told, my immediate family has 3 homes in the area, many more with in-laws and cousins.

Here's a snapshot status report: On our block of 16 homes, not one is inhabited yet. Zero. Families with kids, a pastor of a Catholic parish, a successful restaurant owner – all are still displaced. No phone service, and none on the horizon. The "boil water" order was lifted two weeks ago; our gas service was activated on Christmas Eve.

At first, I felt Breezy folks don't need my sympathy – oceanfront homes are huge and expensive, up to \$3-million. But in the last three months, I've met many who are suffering greatly – and getting little help. On our block is a lovely man who is retired after many years with U.S. Customs; now he's a deacon in our parish. He grew up in Breezy and bought a house there when he married. He and his wife were proud that they'd paid off their mortgage in full a few years ago in anticipation of retirement. But there's a problem: Homeowners with mortgages are required by their banks (by Federal law) to carry flood insurance; most residents without mortgages don't carry it. (Does it cost a lot? Depends on your perspective: up to \$2,500 annually.) So when the deacon's little house was hit by a 13-foot wave, they were stuck. FEMA may (or may not) give them support – a maximum of \$31,400.

Two weeks after the storm a FEMA inspector appeared at my house carrying a Toughbook and a measuring tape. By then we had torn out the floor and subfloor, so she could look from the front door into the basement; she seemed appropriately horrified. I told her we were very underinsured – I never thought I'd see myself write this: ONLY \$100,000. She assured us that she saw much more damage than that, which FEMA would cover. Two weeks later we received a polite letter from FEMA turning us down because we had flood insurance. This letter has struck terror into the hearts of many area residents: it doesn't say "your application is pending until you let us know what your insurer pays; we'll try to help with the rest", although that's the fact. It says "denied"; fine print on the second page explains how to appeal after receiving insurance (up to a year later for many).

Another player is the Small Business Administration, which runs the disaster loan program. It's a good idea – SBA has the infrastructure to evaluate applications and administer the process. But the forms are intimidating, and people tend to give up when they see "SBA", because "I'm not a small business!" Again, failure to communicate: If "DISASTER LOANS" was in larger letters than SBA, perhaps they'd have more applicants. SBA disaster loans are notoriously hard to get: even FEMA operators say that 90% of SBA loan applications are turned down. Bucking the trend, however, a much-deserving close family member was approved.

The Small Business Frenzy

By Steve Max

Recently, small business has become the answer to every question. How can we build the economy, create jobs and raise the standard of living? Small business! Why can't we have paid sick days, family leave, minimum wage, pensions, job safety, environmental standards and fair taxes? Small business! Indeed, Left or Right, good or bad, no proposal will fly if it can't be proven to help small business.

Of course, small business is important. No one is going to come to your neighborhood and start a big business to employ thousands, unless it is the ghost of President Roosevelt with a self-financing, clean energy project like the Grand Coulee Dam. But that would be big government and not allowed. So, can we rely on small business for job creation? There is a lot of fantasy about small business. Let's consider the facts before we mortgage our future to it.

The Small Business Administration says "small" means under 500 employees. This can be a far cry from mom and pop stores, beauty parlors, restaurants, laundries and boutique clothing stores. Two things matter regarding job creation and employment: (1) age and (2) size. It turns out that older and larger businesses create more new jobs and employ more people. For example, 46% of all jobs and 37% of all new jobs are in businesses that are over ten years old with more than 500 employees. Compare this to 19% of jobs and 22% of new jobs in businesses under ten years old with fewer than 500 employees.¹ To look at the extremes, 27% of all U.S. employees work for a business with a payroll of ten thousand people or more, while only 5% work for a business with one to four employees.²

Not only do larger businesses employ more people and create more jobs, they pay better. The average hourly worker at a company with 500 or more employees earns nearly twice the total compensation of a counterpart employed at a firm with fewer than 50 workers. That's \$42.39 per hour, in wages, salaries, and benefits, as compared to just \$22.96 for the smaller shop.³

But what are the trends? Are small businesses the long-term answer to getting and staying out of the economic hole? In noting that the average startup size of a new business is ten employees, a recent study of census data, finds a "potentially troubling trend."⁴ Since the 1980s there has been a long-term decline in the pace of overall job creation in the United States. This reflects a decline in the rate of business startups which went from as high as 13% (of all businesses) in the 1980s to as low as 7% in recent years. A study of similar data by the Labor Department found that in the 2000s, new businesses started out smaller and stayed smaller. The authors suggest an economic shift in which "new establishments are entering the economy with new modes of production that place a greater emphasis on technology and a lesser emphasis on labor."⁵ To round out the picture,

¹ http://www.census.gov/newsroom/cspan/households_and_businesses/20120720_cspan_hh_bus_slides.pdf US Census. 1992 – 2009 .

² <http://www.census.gov/epcd/susb/1998/us/US--.HTM#table1> US Census. Year 2008.

³ <http://www.dailyfinance.com/2012/10/17/who-pays-better-big-companies-or-small-companies/> Daily Finance 10/17/12

⁴ http://www.kauffman.org/uploadedfiles/bds_2012.pdf Kaufman Foundation of Entrepreneurship, May, 2012

⁵ <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2012/03/art4full.pdf> Monthly Labor Review • March 2012 Pg 50.

consider the survival rate of new businesses. Since 1977 only around 50% of the businesses started in any given year were still going five years later.⁶ Of the businesses started in the year 1992, only 29% lasted ten years.⁷

Strangely, those who see small business as the economic engine also extol free market competition. They can't have both. Competition means winners and losers, but unlike baseball, the losers in business don't come back next season. Companies that are gone, are gone for good. Yes, there should be measures to help small businesses be more competitive, but they mainly compete with each other. While wish them well, let us not commit ourselves to a policy of low wages, low benefits and unstable employment in the belief that it will all improve in the future. For the most part, it won't.

It is true that a few small businesses win and become big businesses. It is also true that the economic tendency is for big businesses to become monopolies that shut out competition, but that is another story for another time.

All right then, what can we do? These pages have often suggested the necessary direction. For example, imagine that Congress declared that in twenty years it would be illegal to burn fossil fuels. Now imagine public/private partnerships to electrify the country with renewable energy, to remanufacture every car on the road, to change the heating system in every home and office, to reinsulate every building and construct three new high speed transcontinental railroads. That would be the economic equivalent of World War Two, with full employment, good union wages and fair profits for companies of all sizes. But suppose the private sector won't play? Well, the truth is that they really aren't needed any more.

Condolences

Condolences to George Cavalletto on the passing of his wife and former club member Sheila Ryan.

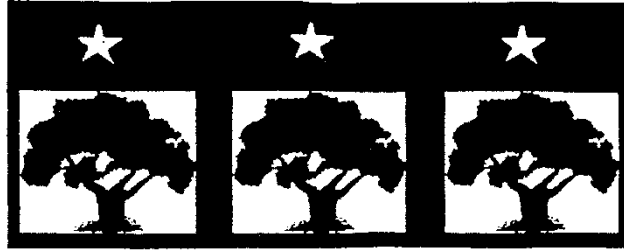
THREE PARKS FUNDRAISER

SAVE THE DATE!

Sunday, April 28th, 1:00PM
Café Frida

⁶ http://www.census.gov/ces/pdf/BDS_StatBrief4_Exit_Survival.pdf 1977 to 2005.

⁷ <http://smallbiztrends.com/2008/04/startup-failure-rates.html> Small Business Trends 4/28/2008



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

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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*

2013 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 _____

Phone (H) _____ (W) _____

Email _____

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

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

NEXT MEETING

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13