

THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

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CLUB MEETING, MARCH 11, 2015

Topic:

ARE PUBLIC SERVICES FOR SALE?

Speakers:

JAMES PARROTT, Deputy Director and Chief Economist, Fiscal Policy Institute

BERTHA LEWIS, Founder and President, The Black Institute

Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2015

Time: 8:00 PM

Place: The Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Avenue at 103rd Street

Room: Chapel/Ballroom

AGENDA

7:45 PM Sign-in

8:00 PM Call to Order

1. District Leader Reports
2. Speakers: James Parrott and Bertha Lewis
Are Public Services for Sale?
3. Discussion and Vote on Resolution in Support of Campaign Finance and Ethics Reform in the New York State Legislature
4. Discussion and Vote on Resolution to the Mayor and Police Commissioner
5. Adjourn

CALENDAR*

Wednesday, March 25, 2015, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Board meeting
The Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Avenue

Wednesday, April 8, 2015, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Membership meeting
The Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Avenue

Wednesday, April 22, 2015, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Board Meeting
The Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Avenue

Save the Date

Sunday, May 3, 2015

Three Parks 40th Annual Fundraiser
Further details to come

*Community events are listed inside.

President's Report

By LAUREN WILLIAMS

At our February meeting, we elected members to the Three Parks Board. We are truly fortunate to have a board so committed to our club's goals: to maintain and improve the quality of life in our neighborhood and beyond, and to elect Democratic candidates who demonstrate ability, integrity, and progressive convictions. Each is genuinely committed to community service and interested in working with others dedicated to ensuring good government.

Our board members bring the knowledge, skills, and experience to provide leadership on a wide range of political issues and activities. I look forward to working with you and them in the months ahead. Following is a list with the election results.

Speakers at our March meeting will focus on the privatization of government services and public sector institutions at all levels. Recent years have seen the private sector taking over services and other functions traditionally provided by government.

James Parrott, Deputy Director and Chief Economist, Fiscal Policy Institute, is a member of the Task Force on Evaluating Economic Development Tax Expenditures recently established by City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. He is also involved in No Bad Grand Bargain, a group that Three Parks joined several years ago during congressional budget negotiations. Parrott was Chief Economist and Director of the Bureau of Fiscal and Economic Analysis for the Office of the State Deputy Comptroller for New York City, and served as Chief Economist for the City of New York's economic policy office under Mayor David N. Dinkins.

Our other speaker is Bertha Lewis, President, The Black Institute (TBI), who founded TBI in 2010 as an action think tank to address persistent issues faced by people of color. She is the former CEO and chief organizer of ACORN, a large and powerful national organization that mobilized the urban poor at the grassroots and fought for their needs. ACORN registered almost one-and-a-half million voters in 2008 and blew the whistle on predatory lending and bad mortgages. In 2014, Lewis was named in City & State's annual list of the top 100 most influential and powerful political leaders in New York City.

Parrott and Lewis will provide examples of privatization and its effects on the delivery of needed services. They will address where privatization of government functions might work and where it would more likely fail. And, since TPID is an activist political organization, we have asked them for suggestions on what we might do to limit privatization in the future and to address situations where it is not delivering the services promised.

Three Parks Election Results of 2015 Board Officers and Members

President

Lauren Williams (35)

1st Vice President

Daniele Gerard (37)

2nd Vice President

Theresa Canter (35)

Treasurer

Ellen Flax (37)

Membership Secretary

Erl Kimmich (39)

Corresponding Secretary

Lorraine Zamora (38)

Recording Secretary

Jock Davenport (39)

Members at Large

Wendy Dannett (36)

Ernestine Gallagher (39)

Elizabeth Kellner (36)

Marie Lunn (38)

Betsy Malcolm (36)

Bruce Markens (36)

Mary Ann Marks (36)

Lynn Bender Max (36)

Steve Max (37)

Merle McEldowney (37)

Abigail McGloster (35)

Milivoy Samurovich (38)

Gerald Schultz (36)

Judy Wood (37)

Governor Cuomo's Attack on Public Education

By BRUCE MARKENS

Three Parks has been committed to limiting the expansion of charter schools and other initiatives to undermine public education. Unfortunately, Governor Cuomo has attacked what he calls the "public school monopoly" and has allied himself with the corporate privateers and hedge funders who want to destroy public education. A coalition of groups, including the Alliance for Quality Education, Class Size Matters, and the United Federation of Teachers, is mobilizing to fight against these proposals. As one step in this process, the coalition has set aside Thursday, March 12th as a date for a citywide protest in front of every public school. More information about this protest and other actions will be posted on the TPID website.

Here are the some important reasons for acting now, as explained by one of the participating groups, NYC Public School Parents:

After cutting school funding sharply in recent years,

Governor Cuomo has threatened to hold any increase in state aid hostage to an arsenal of damaging education proposals, which could severely threaten the quality and local autonomy of NYC public schools. Though he still owes NYC schools over \$2 billion from the Campaign for Fiscal Equity decision, and over \$5 billion statewide, the Governor now says he won't increase funding unless the Legislature approves tuition tax credits to private schools, similar to vouchers, raising the cap on charter schools by 100 and eliminating any regional restrictions, which could mean up to 250 more charter schools targeted to NYC, each one guaranteed free facilities at the city's expense.

These proposals would divert essential funds and space from our public schools. At the same time, Governor Cuomo has also said that struggling schools be put in receivership, taken over by the state and/or turned over to private hands.

Rent Regulation Expires June 15, 2015

By STEVE and LYNN MAX

In the coming months, we must keep up pressure, particularly on Governor Cuomo, but also on our legislators and the Mayor, to reauthorize and strengthen rent regulation while repealing the 421-a real estate tax break. As soon as the weather improves, Three Parks will be back out on the street to inform our neighbors, gather petitions and, as always, register new voters. We are working in coalition with housing groups around the city and will be announcing demonstrations and other events as they are scheduled.

Progressives have long contended that housing is a right, not a privilege. The New York Rent Stabilization law which expires this June doesn't go that far, but it is absolutely essential to keep housing even somewhat affordable. A low vacancy rate of only 3.5% is driving up rents across the city, making landlords increasingly anxious to deregulate the roughly one million stabilized apartments which comprise about 45% of rental units. To accomplish this, the real estate PAC, euphemistically called Jobs for New York, spent \$4.5 million to elect a Republican State Senate majority based on members from safely outside the city.

In another way, housing is certainly a privilege for developers who receive tax breaks known as 421-a. This law expires in June at the same time as rent regulation, setting off speculation about a possible deal. On the totally fallacious theory that developers won't build in New York without it, the 421-a law gives a ten-to-twenty-five-year tax abatement to just about any new apartment building in residential parts of the city.

In recent years, the law's bounty was extended to some of the city's most luxurious buildings in an Assembly bill

sponsored and promoted by Housing Committee Chairman Keith Wright, who is also the chair of the Manhattan County Democratic Executive Committee. The most notorious example is the condo tower at 57th St. near Central Park, known as One57, where a tax-abated penthouse apartment just sold for over \$100 million dollars. The NYC Independent Budget Office estimates that in 2013 alone, 421-a cost the city over one billion dollars in forgone revenue.

Testifying at the budget hearings in Albany in February, Mayor deBlasio called for an extension of the rent regulation laws and for strengthening them by eliminating a provision that deregulates apartments as they become vacant. He also asked for more funding for public housing. He did not, however, call for the elimination of 421-a.

All New Yorker's have a stake in rent regulation. High rents pull down the economy of the whole city, taking money from local businesses and raising the cost of labor including building employees. The Mayor reminded the legislature that 55% of us in New York City spend over one-third of our income just on rent.

Stop The Port Ambrose LNG Terminal

By MERLE McELDOWNEY

A "company" calling itself Liberty Natural Gas has applied for a permit to build a facility off the Rockaways to import liquid natural gas (LNG) and convert it to regular natural gas for domestic distribution. They say they want to spend \$600 million to import gas for what they say are 25 days of peak energy use on the East Coast. The lie is pretty apparent. Is it really worth a \$600 million investment for 25 days?

Once the facility is built, it will be easy to change it over to an export facility, and export all the gas that is being drilled in Pennsylvania and parts of the Marcellus shale not in New York State to an international market, where it will fetch much more money than it would get on the domestic market.

Pipelines will transport this gas to the Rockaways, in some places under water, to this terminal where it will be converted to LNG and loaded onto tankers (some the length of the Empire State Building) and shipped overseas. What is wrong with this? Liberty Natural Gas has to lie about its intentions because it knows it can't get away with asking for an export terminal.

The place Liberty Natural Gas wants to build this terminal is the best spot for a wind farm that can bring clean, renewable energy to the East Coast. The two are not compatible. The presence of the terminal and a shipping lane would eliminate the possibility of a wind farm.

This facility to pipe natural gas and convert it to liquid natural gas is off the Rockaways – an area that has been hit by many hurricanes over the years, and has still not recovered from the damage of Hurricane Sandy.

Governor Cuomo can veto this project. His Commissioner of Health has said that fracking is not good for children, so the Governor has said he would not allow fracking in New York State. It is time for Governor Cuomo to veto this project. He should not allow fracked gas to be piped through our state when it poses a risk to children in other states, and is a serious risk to the children of the Rockaways.

We are asking everyone to call the Governor. Tell him we want wind farms, not dangerous facilities to increase the need for fracked gas. **Please ask Governor Cuomo to veto the Port Ambrose project. The number is 1-518-474-8390.**

A New Form of Debtors' Prison

By WENDY DANNETT

I was shocked by a program I heard on Amy Goodman's "Democracy Now" regarding people who are arrested for minor offenses and then jailed if they cannot pay the fines. The program focused on Ferguson, Missouri, but according to the ACLU and the Southern Center for Human Rights (SCHR), this is occurring all over the country.

The SCHR cites impoverished parents, without counsel, being jailed for child support. In Clinch County, Georgia, jailed people are charged a daily room and board fee, even though it is legally prohibited.

The SCHR also cites the case of a Georgian woman, Ora Lee Hurley, who spent nearly a year at the Georgia Department of Corrections' facility, due to her inability to pay a court-ordered \$705 fine for a 15-year-old drug conviction. Ms. Hurley was employed while at the facility; her paycheck was sent directly to the Department of Corrections, with only \$23 from each paycheck being returned to her. She would have been there indefinitely but for a habeas corpus petition filed by the SCHR on her behalf.

This form of imprisonment has a name: Debtors' Prison. According to the New York Times of February 9, 2015, the purpose of arrests for minor offenses and jailings in Ferguson and Jennings, MO, as suggested by two lawsuits "has been largely financial: to raise revenue to keep these tiny St. Louis County municipalities afloat." The lawsuits allege that the cities of Ferguson and Jennings "have created an unconstitutional, modern-day debtors' prison, putting impoverished people behind bars in overcrowded, unlawful and unsanitary conditions with walls streaked with dirt,

mucus and feces. In the Jennings jail, two suicides have been reported since 2013.

The ACLU has taken on many of these country-wide cases. In an article entitled "Ending Modern-Day Debtors' Prisons," the ACLU states "State and local courts have increasingly attempted to supplement their funding by charging fees to people convicted of crimes, including fees for public defenders, prosecutors, court administration, jail operation, and probation supervision. . . aggressive tactics have been used to collect these unpaid fines and fees, including for traffic offenses and other low-level offenses." Poor people are forced to forego basic necessities of life in order to pay fines and to avoid jail.

Fortunately, these debtor prisons are being exposed to the light of day and being challenged. Just as with the killings of unarmed people of color, this racism must be addressed.

Resolution to Reform the State Legislature

By BETSY MALCOLM

With the budget due April 1st, the "three men in a room" are busy negotiating. The budget contains a lot more than allocations of money. Structural changes in campaign finance and ethics law are being considered. These structural changes are the single most important thing in the budget. They can give us a greater voice in our elections. They affect who chooses to run for office, who wins, and what forces push on them while there.

Candidates who don't have access to pots of money are discouraged from running for office. Wealthy people and those with access to wealth are encouraged to run. What do the developers and charter school operators who put legislators in office get in return for their massive donations? Our legislators would have you believe the answer is nothing. What do you think?

Corruption arises from other sources as well. Many of our legislators claim to work second jobs as attorneys and in other professions. They may use their public office to obtain favors for the people who pay them. This is how Sheldon Silver got into trouble. He may have softened his negotiations on tax breaks for developers in order to obtain their business for his law firm. Another firm that Silver worked for paid him huge referral fees for legal cases referred through a doctor for whom Silver provided public research funds.

However the money is obtained, the potential for corruption is obvious.

Right now, Governor Cuomo is proposing a statewide system of public financing of elections similar to the plan that has worked well in New York City. Small donations are matched with public funds (6:1 in city elections), spending limits are imposed, and transparency rules are enforced. It has also been proposed that legislative salaries be increased and strict limits placed on outside income, similar to the way it works in Congress.

Wouldn't that cost taxpayers a lot of money?

While campaign costs and increased legislative salaries would cost taxpayers, this new system would bring huge savings by curbing corruption. Unnecessary 421-a tax breaks pressed by legislators funded by developers have been estimated to cost a billion dollars a year. The savings from clean government would pay legislators' salaries and taxpayer-funded campaigns many times over.

Three Parks Independent Democrats is making a strong statement: We demand clean government. Our legislators should be funded by us in both their campaigns and their salaries. We need to know that they work for us. We deserve nothing less.

WHEREAS it is crucial to restore the confidence of the public in the integrity of the New York State Legislature and to ensure that the New York State Legislature has the interests of the people as its first priority;

WHEREAS too many state legislators have been bribed and bought, and money can be a pernicious influence in politics, whether obtained as campaign donations or as payment for services;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Three Parks Independent Democrats calls on the state legislature and the Governor to amend state law to reflect the following principles:

Public financing of campaigns is an essential part of real reform. The New York City model that provides matching funds for small donations and sets limits on total campaign expenditures is an example of a successful model of public financing of campaigns.

Loopholes through which individuals can give amounts well beyond the campaign finance limits for one person should be eliminated. This includes the Limited Liability Corporation (LLC) and housekeeping account loopholes.

Outside income of legislators should be limited and full disclosure required. The salary of legislators should be suitably and significantly increased and outside income should be limited by both amount and source.

Resolution to Curtail Police Violence

By ERL KIMMICH

Over the last 6 years, first as a member at large and then as a member of the board of Three Parks, I've often heard it remarked that as a club we need to address the various issues of race. Most of us feel strongly that the disproportionate stop-and-frisk incidents and arrests of young men of color are racially motivated. This is something that we absolutely cannot and will not tolerate in New York City. Our endorsement of John Liu for mayor was in no small part due to his promise to eliminate stop-and-frisk. We know that our public and for-profit prison systems are overcrowded. Prison populations upstate and around the country are disproportionately filled with people of color. As a club, we want to know what can be done about the criminal justice system.

We've invited speakers and panelists. We've said we ought to write a resolution. Then after the shooting of Mike Brown in Ferguson and the killing of Eric Garner on Staten Island, the Three Parks board formed a committee to draft a resolution. I had the honor to work with Gerald Schultz and Corine Petty to put our demands on paper.

We had no way of knowing that this would be among Corine's last projects (she died in January). The subject of justice was dear to Corine. As an educator and builder of young people, she found the increasing criminalization of young people abhorrent. She knew that all people are equal and should be equally respected under the law. Corine thought we ought to include at least a partial list of the victims of police brutality in our resolution. The names of the fallen echo in the minds of many and we will not forget them. We met many times at the Metro Diner on Broadway as fall began to turn to winter last year. Corine was a great pleasure to work with, and I appreciated her ability to keep us on topic as our efforts continued and grew. I hope that the Three Parks membership will pass this resolution so that we might get on with petitioning, letter writing campaigns, and the other things that our club does so well to help shape a more just and better city and state.

WHEREAS the homicide of Eric Garner is another in a long list of incidents of excessive and fatal force used by police officers;

WHEREAS police officers have killed many and wounded more, including Eleanor Bumpurs, Ashanti Bartlett, Michael Stewart, Mike Brown, Sean Bell, Ramarley Graham, Oscar Grant, Amadou Diallo, Kendrec McDade, Joseph Guzman, Trent Benefield, Henry Glover, James Brissette, Ronald Madison, Kathryn Johnson, John Crawford, Rodney King, Anthony Baez, Donovan Jackson, Juan Vaquez,

Abner Louima, Ousmane Zongo, Timothy Stanbury, Kahlif Snowden, Askia Sabur, Robert Davis, Ethan Saylor, Dymond Millburn, and Diana Johnson;

WHEREAS these actions and others like them violate the public trust and perpetuate the belief that some police officers in New York City and around the country do not value the dignity and life of black men, women, and children;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Three Parks Independent Democrats calls upon the Mayor, City Council, Police Commissioner, and all relevant authorities, to:

1. Institute effective training procedures aimed at eliminating these transgressions;
2. Strengthen the Citizens Review Board in its efforts to monitor and report abuses to the Mayor, City Council, district attorneys, and others;
3. Launch an investigation into the homicides of Eric Garner and Ramarley Graham to ensure that justice is served; and
4. Terminate stop-and-frisk and broken-window policies.

Why Serve as a Poll Worker?

In 2015, you can earn up to \$500 for working two Election Days and completing the training course and passing the exam. In 2016, you can earn up to \$1,000 working four Election Days. Most important, you can help ensure that the key process in our democracy works as our founders intended.

If you are interested, please call District Leaders Cynthia Doty (212-749-4085) or Bob Botfeld (212-865-1450).

Community Events

Rally 4 Public Housing

City Hall Park, Manhattan

Thursday, March 5, 12:00 Noon

How Would the TPP Impact our Community?

St. Mary's Church, 521 W. 126 St, NYC

Thursday, March 12, 7:00 PM

Public Housing Matters

Albany Legislative Office, Albany

Monday, March 16, 12:00 Noon

Forum on Mayoral Control

John Jay College, 524 West 59 Street

Wednesday, March 11, 6:00-8:00 PM

A Letter from Letitia James, Public Advocate for the City of New York:

On March 11, my series of Mayoral Control Forums will come to Manhattan. These forums will take place in each of our five boroughs giving parents, elected officials and education advocates a much-needed platform to discuss the future of mayoral control in New York City.

I would like to hear your thoughts about mayoral control and how modifications to the law can help to improve our education system. This is an opportunity to discuss what real community and parent engagement should look like moving forward.

Join me March 11 and beyond, in this vital discussion by pre-registering for the forum today. I look forward to hosting you!

For more information, call 212-669-7200 or email outreach@pubadvocate.nyc.gov

Sincerely,

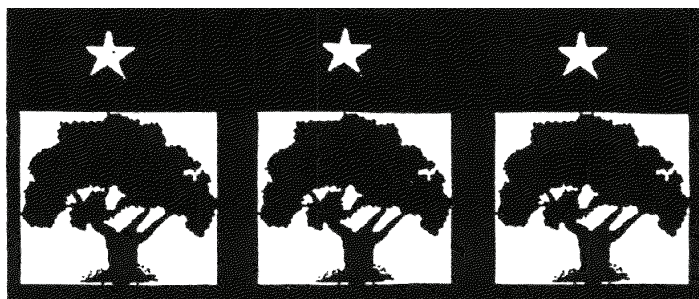
Condolences

The members of Three Parks Independent Democrats wish to express their deep condolences to State Senator Bill Perkins on the recent passing of his mother, Helen Perkins.

Save the Date

**Three Parks 40th
Anniversary Fundraiser**

Sunday, May 3, 2015



Three Parks Independent Democrats

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

Please pay your 2015 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

2015 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 solely by email.

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 2015

Thank you for your cooperation!

Three Parks Independent Democrats

Cathedral Station P. O. Box 1316

New York, NY 10025

Next Meeting

Wednesday, March 11, 2015

Are Public Services for Sale?

Speakers: James Parrot and Bertha Lewis