

THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

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Lorraine Zamora	Chuck Wall Corinne Constantine Jock Davenport Richard E. Luna	Bob Botfeld Cynthia Doty	Lynn Thomas Daniel Marks Cohen

Club Meeting, May 8, 2019, 8:00 pm
The Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Avenue at 103rd Street

How Can We Achieve Single Payer in NY?

Richard N. Gottfried
Assembly Member, 75th District
Chair, NYS Assembly Health Committee

Lessons from Amazon

Michael N. Gianaris
State Senator 12th District

AGENDA

7:45 pm Sign In
8:00 pm Call to Order
District Leader
Speakers:
Richard N. Gottfried
Michael N. Gianaris
Questions & Answers
Adjourn

CONTENTS

President's Report: 2020 Census p.2
State Committee Report: Another City
Charter Revision Commission? p.2
How Insect Populations are Plummeting p.3
Sergei Magnitsky, Bill Browder & Russian
Corruption p.4
Three Parks 44th Annual Benefit pp. 6 & 7

President's Report: 2020 Census

By Lorraine Zamora

At this writing, the Supreme Court's conservative majority seems ready to allow the Trump administration to add a question about U.S. citizenship status to the 2020 census. Critics say that would undermine the accuracy of the census by discouraging both legal and unauthorized immigrants from filling out the forms.

If I hadn't had the privilege of hearing Julie Menin, Director of the Census for New York City, speak to Three Parks at our April 10 club meeting, I might not have such a full understanding of the importance of the 2020 census and the citizenship question to New York City.

Regarding the citizenship question, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross has been a long-time proponent of including the citizenship question on the census form. He maintains that the Trump administration needs citizenship information to be able to enforce federal voting rights laws.

Ms. Menin made it clear that Mr. Ross is carrying out a Republican agenda that is hostile to immigrants and minorities. "When 38% of our city is made up of immigrants, for there to be a citizenship question, we know what this is about." Such a question, she believes, could affect the outcome of the census because it could discourage noncitizens from responding. The Census Bureau has estimated that at least 630,000 households would refuse to take part if the question was included.

What's at stake? The 2020 census will determine how over \$800 billion for federally funded programs gets distributed nationwide. These funds support public schools, public housing, senior centers, Medicaid, roads and bridges and more. The Office of the Census for NYC coordinates the efforts among civic, community, labor, faith-based and all relevant stakeholders to get every New Yorker counted and make certain that NYC gets its fair share.

If our immigrant community remains silent, it could have a dire effect on the distribution of federal funds to our city.

Equally concerning is the fact that 2020 census data will be used to redraw congressional and state legislative districts. If noncitizens are undercounted, New York could lose at least one seat in Congress, if not more—seats that are most

likely now held by Democrats. State senate districts might also be redrawn to dilute the power of New York City residents who tend to lean Democratic. And New York could lose one or more votes in the Electoral College that chooses the President.

The Supreme Court is hearing the case on an expedited schedule, under the pressure of a looming deadline. The census forms are set to be printed in June. Stay tuned.

State Committee Report: Another City Charter Revision Commission?

By Daniel Marks Cohen

The City Charter is essentially the city's constitution. It is the rules that govern the city, and it is amended from time to time. I know, I know, didn't we **just** vote on some revisions to the city charter last year? We did, in fact, and all three ballot measures passed. Refresher: those three measures increased the NYC campaign financing ratio from \$6 to 1 to \$8 to 1, created a (likely pointless) Mayoral Civic Engagement Commission, and imposed 10-year term limits for all Community Boards beginning in 2029. But that was the **mayor's** charter revision. This year we get to vote in November on the **City Council's** take on revising the charter.

There are preliminary hearings in all five boroughs on the proposals from the Charter Revision Commission. Manhattan's hearing is on Thursday, May 9, at City Hall starting at 6:00 pm, and there are a lot of potential changes afoot. The commission staff has issued a report of the areas under consideration. You can read the full version here: <https://www.charter2019.nyc/> but I have summarized them briefly below. (Source: "Charter 2019 NYC Prelim Staff Report 2-Pager April 2019")

Ranked Choice Voting: New York City elections currently allow for a winner who gets only a small share of the vote. When a runoff is necessary, elections can be costly and produce low voter turnout. To fix these issues, the commission is recommending implementing Ranked Choice Voting, a system in which voters rank the candidates by preference order. The candidate who ranks first on the fewest ballots is removed until, after multiple rounds, one candidate has the majority of votes.

Civilian Complaint Review Board: The Civilian Complaint Review Board investigates complaints

by the public against NYC police officers. Critics say much reform is needed to make the NYPD and discipline process more accountable to the public. The commission is recommending the following changes: (1) **Appointments:** Empower the City Council, rather than the Mayor, to appoint Board members directly and give the Public Advocate the power to appoint or designate one or more members. (2) **Disciplinary Guidelines:** Require the Police Commissioner to establish disciplinary guidelines that create clear penalties for misconduct. (3) **Police Commissioner Deviation:** If the Police Commissioner does not follow disciplinary recommendations, require the Commissioner to provide a memo to the Board and the Deputy Commissioner of Trials with a comprehensive explanation. (4) **False Official Statements:** Empower the Board to investigate and recommend discipline when there is evidence that an officer has given a false statement during a Review Board investigation. (5) **Subpoena Power:** Delegate subpoena power to high-ranking Board staff.

Public Advocate: The role of Public Advocate is to be a watchdog and check on the Mayor, but the office has no real mechanism to do so. Establish a method, such as subpoena power, for the Advocate to require officials and agencies to answer questions.

Borough President: The Borough President is responsible for coordinating agency services in their respective boroughs. Presently, Borough Presidents do not have the power to require information from agencies. Require agencies to provide Borough Presidents with certain documents and records related to their budget and land use responsibilities and strengthen agency engagement with borough service cabinets.

Budget: The City's expense budget funds important social services, but it is difficult to know how much the City spends on various programs. Create more specificity in the City's budget, which may improve transparency and accountability over New Yorkers' dollars. In addition, require that the Mayor may not unilaterally refuse to spend money on certain Council-approved funds except for a financial and economic reason.

Corporation Counsel: Presently, the Mayor appoints the Corporation Counsel, who is the head of the NYC Law Department. That person acts as the attorney and counsel for the City as a whole. Require the Council's advice and consent for the Mayor's

appointment of the Corporation Counsel and establish a set term for the Corporation Counsel to serve.

Diversity in Procurement: Support the minority- and women-owned business enterprise program by legally requiring that its program director be a Deputy Mayor or another senior official who reports directly to the Mayor.

Land Use: Improve community engagement in the land use process by (1) providing more time and an earlier opportunity for Community Boards and Borough Presidents to review and comment on applications, and (2) extending the time for Boards to review applications in July and August.

Planning: Critics say the many reports required by the Charter related to city planning are inconsistent and difficult to follow. Clarify how the various city plans and projections should relate to and impact each other. These plans should address future planning challenges, such as neighborhood rezonings. Also, ensure that the public and other stakeholders are involved in these plans.

How Insect Populations Are Plummeting and Why It Matters

By Wendy Dannett

According to an article by Douglas Main in *National Geographic* in February 2019, a study in the journal *Biological Conservation* suggests that 40% of all insect species are declining and could become

Attend a Public Hearing on New York City Charter: Make Your Voice Heard!

The New York City Charter is our City's constitution. It explains the powers of our elected officials and outlines how the City makes decisions about our tax dollars and changes to our neighborhoods. The 2019 Charter Commission—made up of members appointed by the Mayor, City Council Speaker, Comptroller, Public Advocate, and all five Borough Presidents—is working with communities to think of changes that could improve City government. New Yorkers will vote on the potential changes on November 5, 2019.

When: Thursday, May 9, at 6:00 PM (doors open at 5:45 PM)

Where: City Hall

For more information, visit: www.charter2019.nyc

extinct in the next three decades. A researcher at the University of Sydney in Australia, Francisco Sánchez-Bayo, who was involved in the study, has stated that if we don't stop the decline, entire ecosystems will starve. Particularly threatened, says Sánchez-Bayo, are moths, butterflies, bees, and dung beetles as well as insects that help decompose feces. This study followed other disturbing studies: European researchers found in 2017 that insect populations (measured by biomass) in protected areas of Germany had declined 75% in just 27 years.

Another study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences states that in a rain forest in Puerto Rico, the biomass of insects and other arthropods like spiders has fallen 10-60% since the 1970s. There were other serious declines in moths, butterflies, beetles, bees and ants. Factors behind the decline include deforestation and conversion of natural habitats for agriculture, states David Wagner, an ecologist at the University of Connecticut. He adds that the decline of plants such as wildflowers, drainage of wetlands, use of pesticides, and climate change have all played a part.

"Insects serve as the base of the food web, eaten by everything from birds to small mammals to fish. If they decline, everything else will as well," Sánchez-Bayo explains. There are more than a million species of insect compared to 5400 species of mammals. Insects represent 70% of all animal species and are the cornerstone of all terrestrial systems. They pollinate 75% of the world's crops and flowering plants. Countless species of birds, reptiles, fish, and mammals can't survive without insects.

Jill Kiedaisch wrote in February 2019 in *Popular Mechanics* that insect biomass is falling 8 times faster than the decline of birds, mammals, or reptiles. In addition to the 40% of insect species threatened with extinction, one-third are classified as endangered. The environmentalist writer Bill McKibben said we never thought that by inflicting environmental damage, we could destroy nature. But we can and have. Affected insect groups comprise not only specialists in a particular ecological niche, but generalist species, such as ones in your backyard. Four aquatic groups are imperiled and have lost a large proportion of species, writes Kiedaisch. That's four separate groups that are threatened or gone.

Furthermore, fast-breeding pests that are tolerant

of pollutants, such as flies and cockroaches, will likely fill the vacancies left behind. Without insects as moderators of other pest populations, says entomologist and researcher Don Sands, insect populations will flare up and ruin crops. Sánchez-Bayo concludes about the implications of continued species losses: "This will have catastrophic consequences for both the planet's ecosystems and for the survival of mankind." He postulates that we will experience in our lifetime the actual structural and functional collapse of natural systems which have supported life on Earth for the last 400 million years.

The study by Sánchez-Bayo urges the "rethinking of current agricultural practices" in favor of "sustainable, ecologically-based practices" to "safeguard the vital ecosystem services they provide." Unfortunately scientific data requires careful, long-term research, and relatively little has been done, according to the Guardian newspaper. Ultimately, how much land the human population uses determines how much wildlife is lost. We need to protect wild spaces and also reduce the impact of industrial, chemical-based farming. Fighting climate change, taking political action, eating fewer intensively farmed meat products, and flying less could all help, concludes Damian Carrigan of the Guardian. It's time to convert your property into an insect-friendly island.

Sergei Magnitsky, Bill Browder, and Russian Corruption—Part I*

By Elaine M. Hazzard

Bill Browder is the author of *Red Notice, a True Story of High Finance, Murder, and One Man's fight for Justice*. I first encountered Bill online in 2017 while following a lively band of patriotic Americans

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and allies on Twitter who were fighting Trump's usurpation of the Presidency. This little group was subject to an astonishing amount of attacks, threats, and interference by "Russian" trolls. Though the trolls may not all have been Russian citizens, they were believed to be paid to do these cyber acts by the kleptocrats of the Russian Federation or affiliates in transnational organized crime. The viciousness of the attacks surprised me. The acts of the trolls led reputedly to doxing exposure, dangerous home SWATtings, and even the targeted suicide of a patriot who suffered from depression.

At the top of the Russia's hit list is Bill Browder, a man hard at work to bring about a global Magnitsky Act, who is under constant guard. He is vigilant on his security to avoid assassination, for Russia's "wetwork" by its GRU operatives continues unabated. Bill maintains a Twitter presence from which his story and that of Sergei Magnitsky and the Magnitsky Act can be shared.

The titular Red Notice is sent out by Interpol, the international police agency, to arrest criminals in other countries for extradition to the country where the offense was committed. The Russian Federation has never been a member of Interpol. Inexplicably, Russia has been allowed to submit requests for arrest to Interpol, leading to Red Notices that have been acted on by member states, though judicial reviews have at times prevented the extradition.

Intrigued by what I learned from and about Mr. Browder online, I dipped into *Red Notice* where I discovered Bill's grandfather, Earl Browder, a successful labor organizer from Kansas who was invited to Moscow. There he met and married Raisa, a Russian Jewish intellectual, returning to the U.S. to New York to head the American Communist Party. Earl ran for U.S. President in 1936 and 1940 on the American Communist ticket. This drew attention. Earl was arrested for "passport violations" and sentenced to four years in Federal

prison. World War II and the Russian-American Alliance brought Earl a pardon after only one year. That did not stop Senator Joe McCarthy, after the war, from interrogating Earl for months before the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Bill's father Felix was a math scholar who entered MIT at 16 and obtained his PhD by 20. His mother Ava, a Viennese Jew who fled the Nazis to America by adoption at age nine, earned a scholarship to also attend MIT. Bill is candid about his own amusing youthful lack of scholarship, partying, and his decision to rebel against his family history of communists and intellectuals by becoming—a capitalist!

Bill relocates to London as he begins a plucky rise in finance, becoming founder and CEO of Hermitage Capital, a firm with its own Russia fund. To aid transparency within the new markets, his company dutifully reports fraud to the government. This is tolerated while opposing groups of Russian organized crime consolidate power. One day the complaint is against fraud from within the Russian government itself, a theft of taxes that Hermitage has already paid. Browder had thought Putin to be a nationalist. As Putin is exposed to be an actor for network of organized crime, the fight begins. Bill hires the smartest Russian tax lawyer he knows, Sergei Magnitsky. Sergei begins a quixotic fight for justice via the creaky Russian bureaucracy. As Sergei makes progress, Putin breaks the rules. Sergei is tossed in jail on trumped-up charges, tortured, yet refuses to make a false confession. Bill flees, saving what he can of his company.

**See June issue for Part II.*

In Memorium

Three Parks offers its sincere condolences to Joshua Pepper, a former club president, and to Kate Powers on the death of Joshua's mother, Barbara Benjamin Pepper.

Dear Suba Customers,

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140 Attend Three Parks 44th Annual Benefit

Thanks to all our loyal supporters and friends who attended the Three Parks 44th annual fundraising benefit on Sunday, April 28, at the Mexican Festival restaurant on Broadway and 102 Street. Honorees were State Senators Brian J. Benjamin and Robert Jackson, who both received the Ted Weiss Public Service Award, and Peter Arndtsen, manager of the Columbus Amsterdam Business Improvement District (BID), who received the Jesse Crawford Community Service Award.

Distinguished speakers and guests included:

U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer, Congress Member Jerry Nadler, Comptroller Scott Stringer, Borough President Gale Brewer, Assembly Member Danny O'Donnell, City Council Members Mark Levine and Brad Lander, State Supreme Court and Civil Court judges, District Leaders, State Committee Members, other elected officials and candidates, as well as club members and friends. Special thanks to Three Parks board member Corinne Constantine for coordinating the benefit.



Above:
Charles E. Schumer
U.S. State Senator

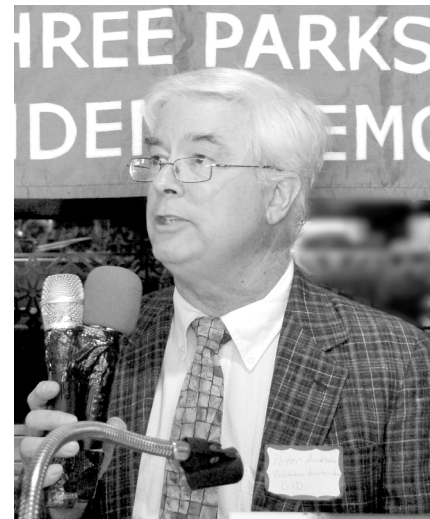
Right:
Scott M. Stringer
City Comptroller





Above:
 Sen. Brian Benjamin
 Congress Member Jerry Nadler
 Sen. Robert Jackson

Right:
 Peter Arndtsen
 Columbus Amsterdam BID



Below:
 State Committee Member Daniel Marks Cohen,
 Sen. Brian Benjamin, Congress Member Jerry Nadler,
 District Leader Bob Botfeld, Peter Arndtsen, Columbus
 Amsterdam BID, Sen. Robert Jackson, District Leader
 Cynthia Doty, and Three Parks President Lorraine Zamora



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Next Meeting: May 8, 2019

**How Can We Achieve Single Payer
in New York?**

Richard N. Gottfried
Assembly Member, 75th District
Chair, NYS Assembly Health
Committee

Lessons from Amazon

Michael N. Gianaris
State Senator, 12th District

Upcoming Meetings

Wednesday, May 22, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Board Meeting

Wednesday, June 12, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Club Meeting

Wednesday, June 26, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Board Meeting

No Club Meetings in July & August

Wednesday, August 28, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Board Meeting

Wednesday, September 11, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Club Meeting