

Law Rules & Ethics Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 8, 2021

Attendance:

Present (9): Sylvia Alexander, Lisa Daub, Paul Ellis, Steve Froot, Rosemary Ginty, Louis Lopez, Omar Murray, Sergio Villaverde, Martin Wolpoff (Chair)

Absent (2): Charles Moerdler, Dan Padernacht (Vice-Chair)

Guest Speaker: Eric Friedman (Assistant Executive Director for Public Affairs, New York City Campaign Finance Board)

Board Members (4): Bob Bender, David Gellman, Myra Joyce, Laura Spalter (CB8 Chair)

Guests (3): Shajada Brown, Deirdre Burke, Matthew Pitt

1. Meeting called to order at 7:10 PM
2. Approval of minutes
February minutes approved unanimously
3. Guest Speaker:
Eric Friedman, Assistant Executive Director for Public Affairs, New York City Campaign Finance Board
Topic: March 23 Special Election to fill City Council vacancy using Rank Choice Voting (RCV)
 - A. Chair introduced Mr. Friedman
 - B. Mr. Friedman explained how, with overwhelming approval of the City Charter revision, there is now a switch to Rank Choice Voting (RCV). Starting with this year, all local special elections and primaries will be conducted through RCV. The dual purpose is to eliminate the need for run-off elections and to encourage a potential coalescence of the votes of minority community voters.
 - C. Under RCV, voters have the opportunity to mark their ballots with a rank order of up to five candidates. Machines will calculate the number of first place votes for all candidates. If a candidate has 50% + 1 of all valid ballots, that person is declared the victor. If there is no such candidate, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is declared as having been defeated and the ballots for that candidate are redistributed to each voter's number two choice as identified on their ballots. If a candidate reaches the 50% +1, that candidate is declared the winner. This process continues until a winner is declared.
 - D. There will be a paper ballot with a consistent list of the candidates. Voters are to select their first choice and, in rank order, up to four additional candidates.
 - E. It is important that voters recognize that a vote for additional rankings take nothing away from their primary choice so long as that candidate is still in the running.

- F. Mr. Friedman used a Power Point presentation to accompany and highlight the points he was making. He volunteered to forward the presentation to the Chair for distribution.
 - G. Unless there is one extremely strong vote getter, waiting for absentee ballots could take weeks before a winner is declared.
 - H. Mr. Friedman then engaged in a wide-ranging Q & A session.
 - I. Chair thanked Mr. Friedman for his comprehensive and interesting presentation
4. City attempt to remove Community Board input for DOT projects
Chair had shared with committee members an article that appeared in "City & State" on Feb 17, 2021. The article focused on CB 8. Man's concern that DOT planned and had already installed a cross-town bicycle lane without seeking input from the Board. The article further stated that DOT finds it inconvenient to adhere to the unanimously adopted 2011 City Council law requiring information to, and response from, the community boards. The Chair noted that here in CB 8, Bronx, without input or prior consultation, DOT installed road bumps in front of the Hebrew Home. Committee discussion focused on whether and how the committee/the Board could best get involved in the debate. Chair offered to draft a letter to be reviewed by committee members. Some committee members preferred to wait until next month allowing input from Dan Padernacht, Chair of T & T, and the other Board chairs and the executive committee.
 5. Latest from the Conflicts of Interests Board
Chair shared the latest "Agreements" coming from COIB and the latest edition of the "Ethical Times,"
 6. City Council legislative spreadsheet
Chair distributed the latest update of the spreadsheet of City Council actions. Since Laura, Board Chair, highlighted the fact that there is in progress an effort to revise the City Planning process that would circumvent the City Planning commission, she was concerned that there were hearings about which we had been unaware. With this in mind, Chair had the office distribute the spreadsheet to all committee chairs. He noted again that the spreadsheet is sorted by City Council Committees and local representative's sponsorships.
 7. Paul Ellis offered his appreciation for the invitation to Mr. Friedman. The chair noted the invitation was extended on the recommendation of the Board chair, Laura Spalter, who heard the presentation at a meeting of the Borough Board.
 8. Meeting adjourned 8:45 PM. Next meeting: April 12, 2021

Submitted by Marty Wolpoff