

**Law, Rules and Ethics Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes – Pending Committee Approval**  
**May 30, 2016**  
**Riverdale Mental Health Conference Room**

**Attendance**

**Present: 5 Martin Wolpoff, Chair, Sylvia Alexander, Rosemary Ginty, Philip Friedman, Irving Ladimer**

**Absent: 3 I. William Stone, Herb Young, Mary Yamagata**

**Others: Robert Press, Marvin Goodman, Kate Theobald**

**Meeting called to order at 7:05**

**1. Approval of April Minutes**

**In favor: 5 Martin Wolpoff, Chair, Sylvia Alexander, Rosemary Ginty, Philip Friedman, Irving Ladimer**

**Against: 0                      Abstention: 0**

**2. Discussion of City Council Intro 1135:**

- A. Chairman introduced Kate Theobald, Legislative Assistant to Council Member Andy Cohen. Following last month's discussion of proposed establishment of Neighborhood Support Teams, chairman reached out to Council Member Cohen for greater insight into the purpose of this legislation. Council Member Cohen, although not personally available, was good enough to ask Ms. Theobald to represent him.**
- B. Committee members pointed out that community boards serve the community using what have become dwindling resources. In support of community board efforts, there is already a mayoral agency known as the Community Assistance Unit. Members felt another entity to be known as Neighborhood Support Teams, with a limited portfolio, and creation of another bureaucracy didn't seem to make sense. Members believed any new available funding should go to supporting Community Boards and the Community Assistance Unit.**
- C. Ms. Theobald promised to provide the Council Member with a synopsis of our concerns.**

**3. Review of COIB opinions. - no new items**

**4. City Council legislative activities**

- A. Ms. Ginty reviewed the latest legislative grid.**

- B. Attention was directed to Intros 209 and 1223 concerning \$.05 charge for plastic bags. It was noted this item is currently being considered by the State Legislature.**
  - C. Attention was also directed to Intro 775 establishing a maximum time the Landmarks Preservation Commission could delay before placing an item on its calendar. This is now Local Law. Committee members will seek to investigate the particular time restrictions.**
  - D. Although the executive committee is not planned to meet until September, Ms. Ginty will forward the Intros grid to committee chairpersons.**
- 5. Community Board 8 Ethical Guidelines Manual**
- A. The subcommittee met earlier in the evening. More editing was done. It is planned that one more meeting take place over the summer and a proposal to be offered to the committee in September.**
  - B. Voting Guide – Chairman distributed a re-edited version of a statement explaining the difference between abstentions and abstentions “for cause.” The document was reviewed and edited in May by LRE, and also by the executive committee which also offered suggestions. Chairman asked committee members to offer suggestions over the summer so that a completed document could be offered to the full board in September.**

#### VOTING GUIDE

Appointed members of the Board are exclusively entitled and expected to vote on resolutions for action submitted to the Board. An official vote requires a quorum ("a majority of appointed members'). All votes are recorded as cast in person and on time. For a resolution to be approved there must be a majority vote of the members eligible to vote.

Votes may be positive, negative, abstentions or abstention noted "for cause." The quorum is not affected by abstention or refusal to vote (refusal to vote is not allowed). All abstentions "for cause" must be approved and are subject to challenge on request. Votes from members who are approved as "abstentions for cause" reduce the majority required for the resolution to be approved.

An abstention "for cause" is acceptable if the cause or reason is a recognized for abstention is permissible as a recognized conflict of interest, the appearance of a conflict of interest or the position of the member is based on statute or decision of the Conflict of Interests Board (COIB). In the absence of a specific response to a question adjudicated by the COIB, the chair of the Law, Rules and Ethics committee shall determine whether the basis of an abstention "for cause" meets the standards provided by the COIB. The chair of the board may offer an opinion, which may be challenged by a member and must be followed by a vote of the board.

Votes from members who have been approved as abstentions "for cause" reduce the majority required for the resolution to be approved. In contrast, abstentions that are not approved to be "for cause" do not reduce the required majority for a resolution to be approved.

All votes are recorded as For, Against, Abstention and Abstentions "for cause." A member who has abstained for cause is permitted to attend the meeting and allowed to take part in the discussion.

Illustration:

There are 10 members present who represent a quorum. A majority (6 affirmative votes) is needed for a resolution to be passed.

Scenario 1: 5 vote in favor, 5 against - the resolution fails.

Scenario 2: 5 vote in favor, 4 against, 1 abstention - the resolution fails

Scenario 3: 5 vote in favor, 4 against, 1 abstention "for cause" - the resolution passes"

**C. Bill Stone had requested discussion concerning voting for board/committee minutes when a member was not present at the meeting. This issue had come up at the May Board meeting when a new member inquired about voting for Board minutes when he wasn't a board member when the meeting took place. LRE chairman offered that non-attendance was not a COIB-approved abstention "for cause." Thus, if there were insufficient positive votes, the motion would fail. He suggested that such individuals should take their cue from the known conditions, such as: will the vote impact on passing or failing, do members who were present at the meeting have problems with approval, etc. In the end, the non-attending member can vote. Members of the LRE committee were comfortable with chairman's comments.**

**6. Old business – Civics Committee**

**Subcommittee met and discussed possible target audiences/objectives. Election Campaign Finance Board Representatives attended the last two meetings and offered guidance. A draft PowerPoint presentation was reviewed and suggestions offered. Tentative focus is on senior citizen center audience. As part of presentation, a survey be taken of attendee interests. Presentation would focus on role of the community board, major issues impacting community, encouraging board membership and voter registration. Another meeting will occur during the summer.**

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Martin Wolpoff  
Chair, LRE committee**