

Law, Rules and Ethics Committee

February 10, 2025

Minutes

1. Meeting called to order 7:38 pm

2. Attendance (quorum present):

Present (4): Martin Wolpoff (Chair), Steven Froot (Vice-Chair), Sylvia Alexander (Via Zoom), Kelli Buford

Absent (1): Charles Moerdler

Guest (1): Julie Reyes (Board Chair)

3. Approval of Minutes: meeting of December 9, 2024 (no meeting held in January 2025) Approved unanimously

4. Chair's Report

A. Appreciation to Rosemary Ginty

Chair Wolpoff announced that Rosemary Ginty had resigned from the Board and was no longer a member of the LRE Committee. Both Board Chairperson Reyes and the committee Chair thanked Rosemary for her many years of service and extraordinary contributions to the Bronx CB 8 and the LRE Committee, including her years as a Chair and Vice Chair of the Board and a previous chair of LRE. The LRE Committee now has 5 members.

B. December 11, 2024 Report from LRE Committee Chair to the Board

The Chair noted that he issued a written Report to the Board, in lieu of the truncated December full Board meeting, which covered subjects including criteria for awards given in the name of the Community Board, the process and requirements for going into executive session, subcommittees vs. working groups, and the impact of votes to "abstain."

C. Report at Executive Committee regarding requirements for going into executive session

The Chair provided additional guidance to the Executive Committee regarding the steps required for either the Board or the Executive Committee to go into executive session.

5. Follow-up on criteria and rules governing awards given by Community Board

- A. Apart from the Irving Ladimer Community Service Award (CSA), for which criteria are already in place, and for which the Board Chairperson Reyes has already appointed a selection committee at the January meeting, the minutes of recent meetings of the Economic Development, Youth and Veterans committees were reviewed with regard to further development of criteria for the respective awards: the Betty Campbell-Most Valuable Merchant, Comeback Kid and Veterans awards.
- B. All three committees have addressed the issue of criteria/eligibility to some extent, although it appears there is additional work to be done.
 - a. Regarding the Veterans Award, if the criteria includes a veteran's military service record, how is it possible for a Board committee to compare one person's historical military service to another's? The current criteria approved by the Veterans Committee state that the veteran nominated *preferably* reside in the community district – why is that not a requirement? With regard to the inclusion of a veteran's spouse (or other household member) as a possible awardee, would the spouse need to be married to the veteran during military service or would current marriage or marriage after active duty suffice? Ms. Bufford suggested that it might be helpful to find out what criteria are used by any other Bronx community boards that make such an award.
 - b. Regarding the Comeback Kid Award, question was raised as to why nominations may only be made by community centers, as opposed to schools, houses of worship, etc.? More specifics concerning the criterion of a specific obstacle that was overcome would be helpful, if that is going to be a requirement.

- c. Regard the Betty Campbell Award, if the criteria include success in business in addition to contributions to the community, how is success in business to be evaluated.

6. Efforts by the New York State Legislature to amend the Open Meetings Law to relax or eliminate quorum requirements in public bodies including NYC community board

- A. Legislation passed unanimously in the last Senate session (but not voted on by the Assembly) – to lower the quorum requirement from one-half of a body’s membership, the current requirement, to one-quarter of a body’s membership – is expected to be reintroduced in the current legislative session.
- B. Another proposed amendment to the Open Meetings Law would require, for appointed boards and commissions, or non-elected agencies and authorities, that only the presiding officer be in attendance at a site open to the public, with other members permitted to attend remotely, for a quorum to be present. There are several different proposals now being introduced for consideration by the legislature that would essentially suspend in-person attendance requirements for community board meetings in NYC in addition to meetings of other public bodies.
- C. “Reinventing Albany,” a coalition of many special interest groups, continues to be a leading voice for relaxing meeting requirements. Many other groups, including those working to expand disability rights, support the proposed measures.
- D. Other proposed legislation would mandate annual training of from 1-5 hours on the requirements of the Open Meetings Law (depending on the proposal) for members of community boards and other public bodies.
- E. Mr. Froot suggested that if it could be determined which proposed legislation appeared to be under serious consideration or likely to be reported out of committee, one or more members of the Committee might consider contacting the appropriate Senate or Assembly committee chair or local elected official on such a committee to lobby against the weakening or elimination of quorum requirements, at least where community boards are concerned.

7. Communication from COIB – the Committee reviewed the latest determinations from the NYC Conflicts of Interest Board.

8. New Business - None

The meeting was adjourned 8:29 pm

Next Meetings: Monday, March 10, 2025,
Monday, April 14, 2025,
Monday, May 12, 2025,
Monday, June 9, 2025.

Meetings begin at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Steven Froot, Vice Chair

Approved,
Martin Wolpoff, Chair

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