

Law, Rules and Ethics Committee
May 12, 2025
Minutes

1. Meeting called to order at 7:34 PM
2. Welcome & Introduction of Committee Members and Guests
Present (3): Martin Wolpoff, Chair, Steve Froot, Vice Chair, Sylvia Alexander
Absent (1): Charles Moerdler
Guests (3): Julie Reyes (Board Chair), Sage Hamilton-Hazarika, Corridor Coordinator Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State, Laura Chenven, History Project
3. Approval of Minutes: April 21, 2025 – Approved unanimously
4. Presentation concerning the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York nomination and Corridor Management Plan Adoption (HTURB)
 - A. Chair explained how Board office requested that LRE consider a resolution that was time sensitive in that HTURB was seeking to collect resolutions from across the state so that the package can be delivered to Albany prior to the end of the current session. The request was for LRE to approve a resolution to be presented at the full Board meeting the following night.
 - B. Sage Hamilton-Hazarika and Laura Chenven provided a background into the current effort. They noted that Maryland has such a scenic Byway, as does one that runs through Mississippi, Tennessee and Alabama. The current project seeks to create such a Byway through New York State starting at the bottom of Manhattan, running north to Albany and then west to Buffalo. The HTURB organizing group has already received resolutions of support from various cities, counties, and townships at various points in the proposed Byway. They have also received resolutions of support from a number of Manhattan community boards. The proposed plan runs through community board 8 as the only Bronx pathway. At this point the committee is seeking support for the project and, if approved at the state level, will return to work more closely with the various civic entities to define what points of interest will be identified in each area. Once the plan is approved, and various historical sites identified, the New York State DOT will develop appropriate signage along the way.
 - C. If approved by the State, HTURB will return to work with Board 8. LRE will leave it to the Board chair to determine which Bd 8 committee will be involved.
 - D. Sylvia Alexander reminded the committee that a few years ago, the Board, passed a resolution, offered by the education and cultural affairs committee, in support of a City Council item introduced by Councilmember Ydanis Rodriguez “to establish a New York

City Freedom Trail Task Force to identify historic sites in New York City such as stations that were part of the Underground Railroad and sites linked to the abolitionist movement with a goal of establishing a walking tour and plaques identify these sites and their historic relevance.”

E. Proposed resolution offered by HTURB is as follows:

WHEREAS, the historic qualities of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Scenic Byway, as described in the corridor management plan, and the surrounding areas have been appreciated and celebrated for over a century by the residents of New York State, as well as tourists, historians, artists, authors, and other visitors to the region; and it is this unique combination of the journeys of Harriet Tubman and those Freedom Seekers who traveled on the Underground Railroad that create the special sense of place that is vital in telling the New York story of the human desire for freedom and the historic sites they created during their journey to emancipation; and

WHEREAS, the Steering Committee of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Scenic Byway, composed of representatives of 22 municipalities along the proposed scenic byway route, committed to work cooperatively to protect and promote the historic, scenic, recreational, and economic well-being of the 544-mile Corridor throughout the state and agreed to pursue the nomination of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Scenic Byway; and

WHEREAS, under the leadership of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Scenic Byway Steering Committee, each of the 22 counties contributed to the development of this corridor management plan by forming local byway groups, encouraging public participation, and leading individual meetings of the Collaborative; and

WHEREAS, the Advisory Committee of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Scenic Byway, consisting of relatives of Harriet Tubman, descendants of Freedom Seekers, Harriet Tubman and/ or Underground Railroad historians, representatives from state and federal agencies has strengthened the historic integrity, representation, and the principles of the corridor management plan; and

WHEREAS, in the process of developing this corridor management plan, the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Scenic Byway Steering Committee has strengthened the bonds of inter municipal cooperation, and the involved entities envision further benefit through scenic byway designation including sustained collaborative progress, increased funding opportunities for recommendations identified in the plan, enhanced partnerships with agencies responsible for the stewardship of resources along and adjacent to the byway route, and an

improved transportation experience that preserves, interprets, and promotes the corridor's intrinsic qualities and resources; and

WHEREAS, fifty-seven and counting New York State Municipalities (Counties of Erie and Cayuga, Cities of Niagara Falls, Buffalo and Amsterdam, among others) have advanced their own respective resolutions in support of the proposed Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway; and NOW,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Bronx Community Board 8 supports the designation of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Scenic Byway which includes programs for stewardship and enhancement of the scenic byway and guidance to manage future activities along its corridor; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Bronx Community Board 8 confirms that they will not approve any requests for new off-premise outdoor advertising signs along the designated Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Scenic Byway route; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Bronx Community Board 8 will work in partnership with the HTURB internal planning team and other municipalities along the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Scenic Byway and local and regional stakeholders in order to support future Byway program development and collaborate with these interested entities to explore opportunities for cooperation and methods to advance the Scenic Byways.

F. LRE voted unanimously to support the draft resolution offered by HTURB in support of their effort.

Vote: 3 in favor (Froot, Alexander, Wolpoff), 0 opposed, 0 abstentions

5. Chair's report

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

On behalf the committee, Vice-chair Steve Froot wrote to Ramdat Singh (Comeback Kid Award) and Chair Wolpoff wrote to Sergio Villaverde (Veteran's Award) requesting that their committees tighten the purpose and intent of the awards presented by their committees in the name of the Community Board. Ramdat reported to the Exec Committee that they will expand the qualifying organizations that can nominate but doesn't want to compel future committee memberships to any rigid criteria. We agreed to engage in some follow-up. Sergio has not responded but the intended committee meeting was cancelled.

6. Status of Albany Legislation Concerning Open Meetings Law (OML) – Steve and chair will follow-up
7. Ambiguity in CB8 Bylaws, Article V, Section 3 – Officers & Committee Chairs - Several new concerns were raised, but in the absence of copies of the bylaws, the Ethical Guidance Manual or the Office Procedures Manual in front of committee members, it was decided to table the discussion until next month.
8. Chair noted that he was approached with a query as to whether there was any prohibition against more than one committee vice chair. Opinion offered that there was no such prohibition. The immediate concern is that having a second vice chair provides an opportunity for newer members to intern in anticipation of the drain that will occur as term limits take hold.
9. NYC Council Spreadsheet – not yet prepared
10. Latest from NYC Conflicts of Interest Board (COIB) – No new Determinations
11. Unfinished Business - None
12. New Business – None
13. Adjournment – 8:55

Next meeting: Monday, June 9, 2025.

Meetings begin at 7:30 PM.