

Minutes of the Special Committee on Racial Equity Meeting of August 4, 2020 via Zoom
(pending committee approval)

Attendees

Special Committee: Roz Zavras, Bob Bender, Bob Fanuzzi, Jyll Townes, Julie Reyes, Margaret Della

Not present: Daris Jackson (*unable to attend due to lack of electricity caused by Tropical Storm Isais)

Bronx Community Board 8: Dan Padernacht, Sylvia Alexander, Laura Spalter, Martin Wolpoff, Nick Fazio, Rosemary Ginty, Steven Froot

Community Members: Jacki Fisher, Cesar Tobar-Acosta, Daniel Ranells, Kirstie Miranda, Marissa Lewis, Pat Hill, Raquel Reynoso, Samuel Liedtka, Thomas Vorsteg

Agenda

The meeting began at 7:07 pm. Committee chair Roz Zavras introduced a series of “agreements” that she also discussed at the beginning of the July 21 committee meeting.

Minutes of the July 21 meeting were unanimously approved.

The committee also discussed the dates of the subsequent meetings: August 18 and August 25, 2020.

The committee’s goal is to produce a report for the CB8 Executive Committee’s September meeting and then the full board meeting that month. The committee began by reviewing the draft report already shared with committee members. What follows is a brief recapitulation of the committee’s review of the draft report, which was led by chair Roz Zavras.

Review of Draft Report

Section 1: Background and Initial Steps

The committee discussed the goal of this section, which committee members articulated as providing essential background on how the special committee came to be formed, including relevant historical background, which is contained in the draft report’s Appendix A. Margaret Della urged that the statement of intent in this section be made more prominent, i.e., how and why the special committee was formed. Bob Fanuzzi recommended that historical background, including the current racial-equity crisis, not be omitted. Roz Zavras urged that some background detail about the community board be condensed. Bob Bender said that the demographic information about the CB8 community helps us identify areas where the

committee should focus its efforts in the coming year. Jyll Townes wants to be sure that we keep the question “Why now?” prominent in our report.

Section 2: Goals and Objectives of the Special Committee

Chair Roz Zavras described this section as the committee’s mission statement and its articulation of the committee’s deliverables. Bob Fanuzzi said that this section should actually be the report’s final section, its conclusion, because it represents the culmination of our discussions. He recommended that in the draft report the current section 4, “Community Board 8 Role and Function,” should become Section 2 and precede Section 3, the “framework and engagement” section in the committee’s report (below). Both he and Roz said that we should draw on the city’s efforts in the area of racial equity to inform our recommendations to CB8.

Section 3: Community Board 8 Role & Function.

Bob Fanuzzi urged that our work become part of CB8’s efforts even before our report is finalized. Roz Zavras said that this can be done simultaneously as we draft our report. Some committees are already at work on racial equity issues. She used the phrase “continuous dynamic engagement” to describe how the special committee will function in relation to the community board during the coming year.

Section 4: Framework of Engagement

To start the discussion of this section, Roz Zavras posed the question, How do we help CB8 committees to find information from city documents and agencies so that they can better perform their mission while addressing racial equity issues. Bob Bender said, as others have said, that we must infuse the issue of racial equity into the work of the committees. Jyll Townes recommends that the committee’s advice guide the board officers as well as its committees. Margaret Della said that we must convey a sense of urgency because hurt and pain have brought us to where we are.

Community Input

The meeting was opened to comments by community members. One prominent comment was that the draft report be circulated for community comment. Jyll Townes suggested the idea of “community ambassadors” from different parts of the community who can engage the community and give input to the community board on racial equity issues. Community members also asked if the committee could work with board members on writing their minutes. Sometimes it appears that the board is taking position on an issue instead of reporting the details of the conversation. Other community members also asked how they could contribute to the draft report. Roz Zavras proposed sending out a 2-page summary and opening comments until August 21, 2020.

New Business

The importance of the census as a critical tool in racial equity was stressed, and it was urged that the community board make every effort to engage in outreach to the community to insure maximum participation in the census.

The meeting adjourned at 8:53 pm.