**BENJAMIN FRANKLIN REFORM DEMOCRATIC CLUB MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

**BY ZOOM ONLINE. AUGUST 26, 2020**

**President’s Report** - President Michael Heller called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM and welcomed those attending. Michael reported that he sent a request to the landlord for a break on the club rent, as we had not been able to use the club. He is waiting for a response. Next Michael reminded club members that any candidate that wins the democratic primary automatically is the club’s endorsed candidate in the November election. Jamal Bowman, our endorsed candidate, will come tonight to address the club. Since he was delayed, we first heard a report on the Democratic Convention.

**Democratic Convention** - Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz and State Committee Member Helen Morik spoke about the Democratic Convention from their perspective as delegates. Helen was disappointed they could not meet in person, but every morning they attended a virtual breakfast with the NY State delegates. Jeff thought it would have been nice to be there, but definitely not safe. He thought the convention was well done and inspiring. He thought that the boy stutterer and the girl whose father’s only pre-existing condition was trusting Trump were powerful. Helen thought the roll call was excellent. Jeff pointed out that the democrats have a platform, which is more than the Republicans can say. Both agreed that Biden had the highest electability of all the candidates.

**Council Report** – Andrew Cohen reported that he was one of three candidates nominated to be a state supreme court justice for three slots. He has a Republican opponent, but given the strength of the Democrats he was not too worried about winning his election. He said the Council lockdown had proved efficient in some ways. The elimination of travel time using Zoom gave him more time for meetings. On the Consumer Affairs Committee he has been working on price gouging and trying to help small businesses. The City budget has been extremely tight this year, but he had been able to secure money for the renovation of the Van Cortlandt House in Van Cortlandt Park. Helen Morik asked why the homeless were on the streets in Manhattan. Andy explained that the shelters housing the homeless were dormitory style and unacceptable because of the pandemic. The City was housing the people from the shelters in hotels with empty rooms most of them in Manhattan. Jeffrey Otto questioned the optics of laying off up to 20,000 people and putting money into the Van Courtlandt House. Councilman Cohen explained that the Van Courtlandt House came out of the capital budget and required state approval. Jeffrey Dinowitz explained that in general the state opposes incurring borrowing for operating expenses, i.e. salaries, but not for capital expenses. The Van Cortlandt House is part of the capital budget and will be paid for with bonds, and will create jobs. It has passed the Assembly, but is awaiting approval in the Senate. Sue Dodell asked if Andy would serve until December 2021. Councilman Cohen said he would only serve until December 2020 necessitating a March special election to replace him. Neil Dick asked about the causes of the current spike in crime. Andy said it was a unique confluence of needs for police reform, Covid-19 and systemic racism, and that these needs will diminish as they are tackled.

**Jamaal Bowman** – President Heller introduced our presumptive Congressman offering him our heartiest congratulations. Mr. Bowman said it was an honor to be here, and he looked forward to working with us to address the crises of Covid 19, climate and racial stress. Jamaal Bowman believes we are under monarchic rule, the federal government has not done its job, and that corporations are not paying their fair share. He is very upset about the shooting of Jacob Blake. Sylvia Lask asked his views on Israel. He replied that he is committed to Israel’s safety and security and to a two-state solution with the Palestinians. Risa and Rick Liskoff wanted to know if he thought military aid to Israel should be unconditional. Mr. Bowman said that he would like to see the aid used to pressure Netanyahu to negotiate with the Palestinians. When asked if Mr. Bowman planned to connect with faith communities and community organizations, he replied that he is on a listening tour for that purpose. Dan Barnett asked if Mr. Bowman thought the schools were ready to open. Bowman said many schools don’t have windows that open, and some classes have no windows, and there is no money to fix anything, buy PPE, hire additional teachers, etc. Mr. Bowman has a six year old and a 10 year old, and the schools are not going to be ready in two weeks. Jeffrey Otto wanted to know if Mr. Bowman supported a domestic terrorism law to prosecute anti-semitism. He does. Delores Dixon wanted to know if he planned to work on developing home schooling. Bowman will work on child care infrastructure, having teachers who do well on remote learning teaching other teachers how to do it, increasing access to computers and the internet, and taking advantage of the learning opportunities the city offers. He believes there is a problem with mayoral control and not enough district involvement. Courtney Dastis asked Bowman’s top priorities to reduce carbon emissions. His top priorities are that new public housing be built correctly and schools should be brought in alignment with carbon goals. Asked what committees he would like to serve on, he identified Education, Housing, and Transportation.

**Phonebanking** – President Heller appointed Aaron Stayman, District Leader Eric Dinowitz and Vice President Dan Johnson to organize phonebanking. The club is making phone calls to Pennsylvania every Thursday night from 7 to 8:30 PM. Contact [Aaronstayman1@gmail.com](mailto:Aaronstayman1@gmail.com) to join Zoom for training and assistance. Dan said direct contact with voters was the best way to activate them and that the need is urgent. If you are interested in texting, or writing letters or postcards contact [Helen.krim@gmail.com](mailto:Helen.krim@gmail.com) to sign up.

**Voting** – Eric Dinowitz reported that you can now apply online for the absentee ballot, and you should do that now. This will eliminate one mailing. Once verified, the requests are sent to a third party, who actually mails the ballot. We recommend you mail the ballot as soon as you receive it. Make sure it is postmarked. You can vote early, and if you are afraid your ballot won’t be mailed you can drop it off at the polls on an early voting day. You may also vote in person on election day.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.