**BFRDC**

**MEMBERSHIP** **MEETING MINUTES**

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2021, 7:00 PM**

**ONLINE ZOOM MEETING**

Call to Order at: 7:02pm. A quorum was present.

Due to the absence of the president, Michael Heller, the meeting was chaired by the first vice president, Bruce Feld.

**AGENDA**

1. **President’s Report**

Bruce spoke about the recent passing of member Marcia Allina, a longtime club member and former Democratic state committee member who had contributed so much to the club. Also noted was the tragic loss of member Ruth Mullen, who died after being struck by a bus in our community. VP Feld also reminded the membership about the upcoming November elections for local officials and the amendments to the New York State Constitution.

1. **NYS Constitutional Amendments**
	1. Proposal One

Redistricting changes would: a) require the state to count all residents including non-citizens and would require that incarcerated people be counted at their last place of residence, b) changes the thresholds for adopting redistricting plans when one party controls both legislative houses, and c) caps the number of state senate seats at 63.

* 1. Proposal Two

Adds a right to clean water, clean air, and healthful environment to the NY Constitution Bill of Rights.

* 1. Proposal Three

Allows the legislature to institute same day voter registration by removing the requirement that voters register 10 days before an election.

* 1. Proposal Four

Codifies the “Dinowitz law” that was in effect for 2021 (due to COVID-19) to provide for No Excuse Absentee Ballots.

* 1. Proposal Five

Raises the maximum jurisdiction of the NYC Civil Court from $25,000 to $50,000 (which was sponsored by Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz.)

The following spoke regarding each proposal:

**Betsy Gotbaum**, executive director of the Citizens Union and former NYC Public Advocate; **Laura Quigg**, co-chair of the Voter Services Committee of the League of Women Voters of NY; Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz, chairperson of the Codes Committee.

Ms. Quigg outlined the substance of each proposal and reported on the position of the League of Women Voters about each. The LWV supports Proposals 2, 3, and 4, and opposes Proposals 1 and 5. She mentioned that the opposition to Proposal 5 was due to insufficient time for the LWV to make a proper analysis of its effects. On Proposal 1, Ms. Quigg stated the LWV’s opposition to it stemmed from the view that it gives too much power to the majority party, and that the LWV believes that the preferred method of redistricting should be by a non-partisan commission. As to the rest of the proposal, she stated that the LWV supported the changes in Proposal 1.

Ms. Gotbaum stated that the Citizens Union supported Proposals 2, 3, 4, and 5. They oppose Proposal 1 because the group believes it gives the majority party too much power over redistricting. She also reminded members that the Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC) will hold a hearing on the proposed plans for redistricting under the new law in the Bronx on November 9, 2021, and urged everyone to attend.

In response to questions from members, Ms. Gotbaum stated that the implementing legislation has not yet been written for any of the proposals. As far as Proposal 3 goes, the assumption is that the verification process will be similar to the one already in place for new voters where they are asked to produce ID the first time they vote. Overall, the new system is expected to reduce the administrative burden on the election boards.

Assemblyman Dinowitz stated that he is supporting all five of the proposals. Proposal 1 was designed to address problems with the redistricting process and census counts in the current version of the state constitution. He stated that the Republicans on the IRC had used their power in the past and presently to advantage Republican safe districts and to cut up Democratic districts to gain power both locally and federally in the House of Representatives. They also used the census count to advantage districts where prisons are located.

The participants in the meeting approved endorsement of all the proposals as follows:

Proposal One: Yeas 21, Nays 1, Abstentions 2

Proposals 2-5: Yeas 25, Nays 0, Abstentions 1

 **3. Elected Officials Reports**

*Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz*

In the interests of time, Jeff limited his remarks to the following:

1. The Eviction and Foreclosure Moratorium was passed by the Legislature and signed by Gov. Hochul. This bill is similar to the one written by Assemblyman Dinowitz earlier this year. It extends the moratorium to January 15, 2022. These bills have prevented tens of thousands of New Yorkers from losing their homes. He was enthusiastic about the new Governor.
2. Assemblyman Dinowitz announced two public service events:
	1. Shredding Event on October 10, 2021, from 10 am-1 pm in front of his office.
	2. Free Regular Strength Flu Shots on October 13, 2021, from 10 am-1 pm at St. Gabriel’s Church.

*City Council Member Eric Dinowitz*

Council Member Dinowitz reported that the City Council Veterans Committee, that he chairs, met for the first time. A new policy has been implemented that upgrades veterans’ services to all veterans regardless of their discharge status.

Through Eric’s efforts, and the efforts of many community activists, Meg’s Garden and the Farmer’s Market at Clinton HS have been saved.

The Department of Sanitation has not approved the resumption of composting in the Bronx because of “stated” weak demand. Large buildings are counted the same as single family houses by the DOS for the purposes of determining demand. Buildings must request this service by contacting the agency at: https://dsny.force.com/curbsidecomposting/s/

Due to public pressure and the advocacy of both Assembly Member Dinowitz and Council Member Dinowitz, DOT has agreed to the following changes at the intersection of Johnson and Kappock Streets, where Ruth Mullen lost her life, immediately or in the near future.

1. Move streetlights to better illuminate the intersection.
2. Create better curb cuts and crosswalks.
3. Institute left-turn calming measures to regulate traffic.
4. Perform a traffic study to determine if a signal is needed at the intersection.

Eric spoke about the hurtful letters that have been recently published in the Riverdale Press about the recent elections for City Council District 11. He feels that the writers are trying to delegitimize the elections and are very disrespectful to the voters and the volunteers who supported him, whom he thanked.

*Luke Hayes for Congress Member Jamaal Bowman*

Mr. Hayes emphasized Rep. Bowman’s strong support for the both the Infrastructure Bill and the Build Back Better Act. Rep. Bowman is strongly resisting efforts on the part of some Democrats in both houses to water down the BBB Act. He mentioned that 90% of the jobs in the Infrastructure Bill will go to men, and that the BBB Act will reduce this disparity by supporting women and children.

Getting the Temporary CR for funding the government has slowed down negotiations for passage of the BBB Act.

Some members stated that while they supported the efforts of Rep. Bowman to get the BBB Act passed with appropriate funding, the important thing is to pass both bills so that Democrats have something to run on in the elections next year. Delay means that Americans will not see the benefits of these bills before they make their decision about whom to support next year. No one is happy with the current progress on these bills.

CM Dinowitz thanked Rep. Bowman for his support for the funding of the Iron Dome for Israel. He also stated that the Republicans have been very united in opposing the Democratic agenda, and that Democrats need to get united on this agenda also.

1. **New Business**

Michael Friedman thanks all those who supported his walk, Making Strides against Breast Cancer. Those wishing to make donations should contact Michael at michaeloes@att.net.

The meeting adjourned at 9:04pm.