Benjamin Franklin Reform Democratic Club

Executive Committee Meeting

October 13, 2021 at 7:00 pm

Minutes

President Michael Heller called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm.

Present: Ira S. Bigeleisen, Delores Dixon, Nona Louise Dunbar, Julia Engel, Bruce Feld, Ellen Feld, Mitzie Finley, Michael Friedman, Michael Heller, Randi Martos, Helen Morik, Ivan “Duffy” Nedds, Kate Theobald, Fredda Tourin, Bill Weitz. Guest: Jeffrey Dinowitz.

A quorum was present.

**AGENDA**

1. **Proposed amendments to the bylaws with respect to the Club nominating and election process**

The lengthy description of the substance of the proposed changes, discussion, and the proposed additions and deletions are presented **below**.

President Michael Heller began the discussion by briefly describing how the current Club election methods have become unwieldy and outdated. Vice President Bruce Feld, supported by his fellow former Bylaws Committee co-chair Paul Ellis, proposed the bylaw amendments to the Club’s nomination and election processes.

The first topic discussed was the method for voting for Vice Presidents. It was suggested that, in case of a tie, the vice presidents themselves might decide who should be 1st, 2nd and 3rd Vice President. This was done in the recent club election, and ratified by the Executive Committee. In the proposed bylaws change, Bruce and Paul suggest that in such an instance the committee should decide the rank order, and there was a consensus that this was the best method.

Committee members also discussed keeping the deadline for petition submission to two weeks before the annual meeting in order to provide opportunity to better communicate about the candidates and better organize the ballots.

Vice President Helen Morik voiced concern about providing maximum opportunity to prospective candidates to secure petition signatures. Out of this discussion, **the proposal was amended** by adding the following parenthetical phrase regarding nomination petition signatures to Sec. 3 (b) after the word “signed”: “(including valid e-signature or other verifiable method)”

After this change and all discussion, **the committee unanimously adopted the proposed amendments**.

The committee then placed consideration of the proposed bylaw amendments on the agendas of a **special membership meeting of October 20 and the regular monthly meeting of October 27** (approval at two consecutive meetings are required.)

1. **Organization of upcoming fundraiser**

We are looking for a large private home to hold the event. The members (in formation) of the Brunch Committee are: Virginia Krompinger, District Leader Randi Martos, and Fredda Tourin. Mike Heller volunteered to find a location. We need to set up the online invitation platforms. No special guests have been invited, as yet.

1. **General election campaign plans**

Plans are to organize for Council Member Eric Dinowitz, Eric Adams, and the five state constitutional amendments, all endorsed by the Club. Mike Heller reported that the Adams mayoral campaign is very low-key right now. Mike will reach out to the campaign. Recording Secretary Ira Bigeleisen will reach out to the Dinowitz campaign to see if they need help.

1. **Expediting the membership renewal process**

Corresponding Secretary Duffy Nedds will work with Mike to reach out electronically to our members to renew their memberships. Outreach will include personal contact as needed. There was discussion about what date, after the next annual meeting, should we remove people from the mailing list who don’t pay their dues and apparently don’t wish to continue as Club members. It was agreed that this should be decided at a later date.

1. **New Business**

Michael Friedman, as he has done in past years, will soon participate in a walk to fight breast cancer. He requested contributions to the American Cancer Society to support the event, Making Strides Against Breast Cancer. For more information, email Michael at [Michaeloes@att.nett](mailto:Michaeloes@att.nett).

Meeting Adjourned at 8:11pm.

**Information regarding Agenda Item #1**

INTRODUCTION

Amending the club bylaws (Art. XVII) requires approval of a majority of members present at two consecutive meetings held at least a week apart.

The proposed changes, to be placed on the club membership meeting agendas by the Executive Committee, are designed to simplify and modernize the way we select our club officers and members at-large of the Executive Committee. Their substance is described in detail in the outline below, followed by the proposed deletions and additions to the current Article VII, Election of Club Officers and Members At-Large of the Executive Committee. (Proposed deletions are hard-bracketed in ~~[red.]~~ and struck-through. Proposed additions are underlined in blue.)

**SUBSTANCE OF PROPOSED BYLAW CHANGES**

* NOMINATION PROCEDURES (Sec. 1 – 5)
  + CURRENTLY there are three methods that may be used to nominate for officer positions and four methods for at-large Executive Committee members
    - By the Nominating Committee
      * For 7 officer and 16 at-large positions
      * May be additional nominees by three or more committee members
    - By Petition
      * At least two weeks prior to the late-January annual meeting
      * Less than two weeks prior to the late-January annual meeting
    - From the Floor
      * For officers, at the mid-January meeting
      * For at-large Executive Committee members, at the mid-January meeting or the late-January annual meeting
    - Following the Officer Election
      * For at-large Executive Committee member following defeat of any election for officer, at the late-January annual meeting
  + PROPOSED to be a single method of nomination
    - By Petition
      * For all 23 positions, at least two weeks prior to the late-January annual meeting
* ELECTION PROCEDURES (Sec. 6 – 8)
  + Election Committee
    - CURRENTLY, the appointed three-person Election Committee is described as “responsible for the conduct of the election.” Despite the sweeping bylaw description, this committee is usually appointed late in the process and has not exercised this responsibility. It has been a committee of tellers to count the votes.

PROPOSED that its description match its actual function, limited to “counting the votes.”

* + Voting Eligibility
    - CURRENTLY, new members and renewing members are required to be in good standing (including paying their dues) by January 1.

PROPOSED, that renewing members will have to the date of the annual meeting (usually held the last week of January) to pay their dues and be eligible to vote. This will codify what has been the practice for decades.

* + Conduct of the Election
    - CURRENTLY, the secret ballot is described as “written.”

PROPOSED, that “written” be removed since secrecy of the ballot can be and has been maintained by other means (e.g., voting program on Zoom)

* + - CURRENTLY, if no nominee receives a majority, the field is reduced by one and a run-off election is held. Officer contests with a number of nominees could require multiple run-offs.

PROPOSED, if no nominee receives a majority, a single run-off is held between the top two nominees.

* + - CURRENTLY, members must rank their choices for vice president by the method of weighted choices (marking their ballots 3, 2, 1 for their 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choices, respectively.)

PROPOSED, that the vice presidents be ranked by their vote totals.

* CURRENTLY, no provision is made for ties in balloting for vice president rankings.

PROPOSED, the Executive Committee shall assign vice president rankings in case of a tie or ties.

* + - CURRENTLY, a member nominated for a position of officer who is not elected shall be placed on the ballot for member-at-large of the Executive Committee unless that member indicates an unwillingness to serve.

PROPOSED, that this provision, added to the bylaws 25 years ago, be deleted.

* + - CURRENTLY, in case of a tie vote between or among at-large executive committee nominees, irrespective of their vote-total rankings, a run-off election is to be held.

PROPOSED, that ties be adjudicated only between or among those with the lowest vote totals (the 16th of the 16 positions, for example) and then by coin toss or a similar method.

## *ARTICLE VII - ELECTION OF CLUB OFFICERS*

## *AND MEMBERS-AT-LARGE OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE*

***Section 1 - Schedule***

The Club officers and members-at-large of the Executive Committee shall be elected at the Annual Meeting.

#### [Delete this entire section~~] [Section 2 - Nominating Committee~~

~~a)~~ ***~~Qualification.~~*** ~~Any member in good standing at least sixty days prior to the election of the Nominating Committee is eligible to serve on the Nominating Committee.~~

~~b~~*~~)~~* ***~~Election.~~*** ~~At a Club meeting held at least two months prior to the Annual Meeting and called for this purpose, a Nominating Committee of nine members shall be elected in the following manner: Nominations shall be made from the floor. At the close of nominations each member eligible to vote shall vote for nine nominees. The nine nominees with the highest total vote shall be elected. In case of a tie, a run-off vote shall be held. If only two nominees are tied, the nominee receiving a majority shall be elected. If three or more are tied, balloting procedure shall be by the balloting method of weighted choices. The nominees receiving the highest weighted total vote shall be elected.~~

~~c)~~ ***~~Meetings.~~*** ~~The first meeting of the Nominating Committee shall be called by the President as soon as practical and shall be open to all members of the Club who may present names to the committee for consideration. The Nominating Committee shall select its own chair. All members shall be notified by mail at least four days in advance of such meetings necessary to its deliberation.~~

~~d)~~ ***~~Nominations.~~*** ~~The Nominating Committee shall present at least one nominee for each office. Three or more members of the committee may present an additional nominee for any position, who shall also appear on the ballot. The Nominating Committee and committee members presenting additional nominations shall not nominate anyone who has not communicated a willingness to serve in the position for which that member is under consideration.~~

~~A member of the Nominating Committee may not be a nominee for a position of Club officer during his or her term of committee service.~~

~~e)~~ ***~~Reporting.~~***~~The Nominating Committee shall report its nominees and additional nominees of three or more of its members, if any, to the Corresponding Secretary who shall send the names of the nominees to the general membership at least thirty days in advance of the Annual Meeting.]~~

***Section 3 – ~~[Additional]~~ Nominations***

*~~[Delete this subsection]~~* ~~[a~~*~~)~~* ***~~At the Club Meeting Two Weeks in Advance of the Annual Meeting.~~*** ~~There shall be a Club meeting two weeks in advance of the Annual Meeting, at which time nominations from the floor or by petition for any position may be made providing ten seconds or ten percent of the membership, whichever is fewer, are presented for such nomination.]~~

b) ***Prior to the Annual Meeting.*** A nominating petition for election as Club officer or at-large member of the Executive Committee signed by at least ten members or ten percent of the total membership, whichever is fewer, ~~[may]~~ shall be presented to the Corresponding Secretary for verification at least two weeks prior to the Annual Meeting. The Corresponding Secretary shall notify the membership of ~~[an additional]~~ a nominee not later than one week prior to the Annual Meeting, and the name shall be added to the ballot. ~~[A nomination by petition made after this time but sufficiently prior to the Annual Meeting to enable the Corresponding Secretary to verify the petition shall be entered on the ballot at the Annual Meeting.]~~

c) ***At the Annual Meeting.*** At the Annual Meeting, there shall be no nominations from the floor**.** ~~[for officers but nominations from the floor or for any other position may be made providing ten seconds or ten percent of the membership, whichever is fewer, are presented.]~~

***Section 4 - Petition Signatures ~~[and Seconds]~~***

No member may sign more than one petition ~~[or second a nomination from the floor]~~ for the same position of Club officer except for Vice President, for which members may sign up to three petitions. Members may sign up to 16 petitions for at-large members of the Executive Committee. ~~[for more than one petition or make seconds for nominees for other positions. Members of the Nominating Committee may not sign any petitions nor make or second any nomination from the floor.]~~

***Section 5 - Nominee Presentations***

A nominee desiring to speak will be granted not more than five minutes if the position is contested, nor more than three minutes if the position is uncontested. Nominees shall respond to questions from the floor, subject to a time limit set at the discretion of the Chair.

***Section 6 - Elections Committee***

The President, with the approval of the Executive Committee, shall appoint a three-person Elections Committee which shall be responsible for ~~[the conduct of the election]~~ counting the votes. ~~[The committee shall report to the membership at the first Club meeting in January.]~~

***Section 7 - Voting Eligibility***

A new Club member in good standing as of January 1 of the election year shall be eligible to vote. A renewing Club member in good standing by the date of the Annual Meeting shall be eligible to vote.

***Section 8 - Conduct of the Election***

Nominees shall appear on the ballot for each position in last name alphabetical order. Voting shall be by secret ~~[written]~~ ballot. There shall be no proxy or absentee ballots.

a) ***Officers.*** There shall be a separate ballot for each position of officer in the same order as listed in this Constitution. Each member eligible to vote ~~[shall]~~ may cast one vote for each position to be filled, and a majority of the votes cast shall be necessary for election. If no nominee receives a majority on the first ballot, a run-off vote shall be held between the two nominees with the highest votes. ~~[the nominee with the fewest votes shall be dropped from the ballot and another vote shall be taken, until a nominee receives a majority.]~~ Each member eligible to vote [shall] may vote for up to three nominees for Vice President ~~[The Vice Presidents shall be elected by the balloting method of weighted choices,]~~ with the nominee receiving the highest ~~[total weighted]~~ vote elected as First Vice President, the second highest as Second Vice President, and the third highest as Third Vice President. In case of a tie or ties, the Executive Committee shall assign the vice-presidential rankings.

b) ***Executive Committee.*** ~~[After the election of officers t]~~ There shall be a single ballot for members-at-large of the Executive Committee**.** ~~[A member nominated for a position of officer who is not elected shall be placed on the ballot for member-at-large of the Executive Committee unless that member indicates an unwillingness to serve.]~~ Each member eligible to vote ~~[shall]~~ may vote for up to ~~[no more than]~~ sixteen nominees for the Executive Committee. The sixteen nominees receiving the highest number of votes shall be elected. In case of a tie among the nominees with the lowest votes, ~~[a run-off vote shall be held]~~ election shall be determined by a coin toss or another simple, unbiased method.