

DOWNTOWN INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS MEETING MINUTES

OCTOBER 6, 2011

PLACE: 310 GREENWICH STREET, 2ND FLOOR

TIME: 6:30 PM

CHAIR: JEANNE WILCKE, PRESIDENT

1) D.I.D. DISTRICT LEADERS - ELECTION RESULTS & CONGRATULATIONS

64th Assembly District Part C:	PAUL NEWELL	Re-elected with 68% of vote.
	JENIFER RAJKUMAR	Newly elected, 70% of vote.
66th Assembly District Part B:	JOHN SCOTT	Newly elected, 77% of vote.
	JEAN GRILLO	Unopposed, won prior election with 77% of the vote.

2) POLL WORKERS NEEDED

District Leader Jean Grillo spoke of need for election day Poll Workers. The pay is \$200. If you know anyone who would like to be a Poll Worker, email info@didnyc.org to get in contact with one of your District Leaders for an application form. Or Board of Elections website: <http://vote.nyc.ny.us/pollworkers.html>

3) REDISTRICTING & ELECTION DATES

District Leader Paul Newell spoke about Federal law which requires NYS's Primary Election be earlier than September to allow time for absentee ballots to be received and returned, particularly for military troops and others abroad. NYS has received compliance waivers, and again may be asking for waivers. Little has been done by Legislators to comply.

D.I.D. continues to support a nonpartisan redistricting commission. Of note was news that a student took basic public data and drew a credible redistricting map, taking into account the Voting Rights Act. He showed that nonpartisan redistricting is not an impossible task that takes months to do. Even more interesting is that this was a 19-year old student located in Germany.

4) ST. VINCENT'S HOSPITAL UPDATE & DEMANDS FOR A FULL-SERVICE HOSPITAL DOWNTOWN

Background: Downtown NYC, has seen a 91% increase in residents in 10 years, thousands of people work downtown, the 9-11 Memorial will have millions of visitors, and yet downtown has no full-service hospital since St. Vincent's closed. The former St. Vincent's site is slated for luxury condo development.

District Leader Keen Berger and Village Independent Democrats president Jonathan Geballe informed attendees of the Live & Learn Coalition. The Coalition is demanding that plans for the St. Vincent's hospital site include affordable housing, true public space, address school needs (Morton Street site) and limit height and bulk. Community Board 2 Full Board meeting is October 20th.

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb2/html/calendar/calendar.shtml>

D.I.D. reaffirmed its former position and further resolved:

Downtown Independent Democrats reiterates its strong support for a full service hospital at the site of the old St. Vincent's, as laid out in our June 2, 2010 resolution calling on the City Planning Commission, Community Board 2 and the New York City Council to zone the land under the old St. Vincent's Hospital exclusively for community hospital use – and pledge not to allow any variances in the absence of a full service hospital.

DID further reiterates our long-standing position that any and all residential development in Lower Manhattan and surrounding neighborhoods should address the shortages of affordable housing, public space and school seats in Manhattan south of 14th Street.

5) OCCUPY WALL STREET

A spirited discussion was held on the protests.

Resolution from the Downtown Independent Democrats on the Occupy Wall Street Movement:

Downtown Independent Democrats is the oldest and largest progressive Democratic organization in Lower Manhattan and has represented New York City's Financial District for 40 years. We have been committed to social justice and equality as well as to the general improvement of the quality of life of Lower Manhattan for that entire time.

In light of these two missions, the Downtown Independent Democrats:

- Shares the Occupy Wall Street Movement's grievances on the growing and unsustainable economic inequality in the United States.
- Endorses Occupy Wall Street's call for increased regulation and accountability for the financial services sector, including reinstatement of legislation similar to the Glass-Steagall Act. The DID recognizes that a robust, dynamic, stable and well regulated financial services sector is essential to the life of our neighborhood, our city and our country.
- Commends the OWS organizers for their outreach to community members on quality of life and noise concerns, while calling upon them to improve on this front especially in the area of drumming as well as to continue their engagement with our neighbors.
- Recognizes the NYPD's difficult and important role in maintaining public safety and calls upon them to use maximum restraint when dealing with non-violent political protest.

The people - united – will never be defeated.

6) RESPONSIBLE BANKING BILL - NYC COUNCIL

Councilmember Margaret Chin spoke to D.I.D. on her advocacy for the Responsible Banking Act (Intro. 485) which would create a ranking criteria of banks to evaluate if banks are meaningfully addressing credit and financial needs of communities throughout the city. City agencies may then choose banks to invest funds and obtain services by using these rankings. Several spoke that a ranking system will encourage taxpayer funds be invested with community-minded banks, and in turn will hopefully provide local jobs.

7) SOHO BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Councilmember Margaret Chin advised that the SoHo Business Improvement District was proceeding through NYC Council. Members of the public will be able to speak at the public hearing, which has yet to be announced. Sean Sweeney, DID member and Director of the SoHo Alliance, and others spoke to Councilmember Chin that residents are aligned against the BID and questioned about votes for the BID that were cast by people with no authority to do so.

D.I.D is firmly against the SoHo Business Improvement District. Summing up general comments from past and present meetings: Having large real estate owners in control of a BID, with minimal community representation, skews democracy away from the people. The original BIDs, like in Times Square, were in areas with blight and great needs. In SoHo, the emphasis of this BID is tourism and cleaning streets. It is not a "blighted" area. Cleaning streets is a task better served through a local business association. The proliferation of BIDS is becoming a second tier of government, yet their voting power is often with large real estate interests. Residents have very limited influence, and usually a minimal one or two votes on BID boards. There is great concern that this SoHo BID is part of a continuing trend that undermines and takes away the voice of the community and community boards. BIDs have direct access to NYC agencies through regular monthly meetings, unlike residents who go through community boards, which have only advisory roles. In the beginning and even now, certain Business Improvement Districts have been beneficial. But the city should not be "BIDded" out everywhere. Many in the community have brought forth a need to reframe the "Business" Improvement District to a "Community" Improvement District concept.

8) LACK OF AND NEED FOR COORDINATED CITY PLANNING

There is lack of and need for coordinated city planning over downtown. At the meeting, this resonated with discussions on Rudin's plan for the St. Vincent's site, along with NYU's plans for buildings, and thousands of added students and faculty. There are long-standing views among the community that development approvals cannot be in isolation. Affordable housing, infrastructure, open space and schools must be required as part of approvals.

We need to address planning from the grassroots up. There appears to be limited planning from the top down. The need extends across communities and community boards, as all areas feel impacts. We discussed sitting down with District Leaders and others to strategize coordinated city planning at the local level.

Downtown has a 91% increase in population in 10 years, millions will visit the 9-11 Memorial, the new Spring St. Sanitation Garage will have three sanitation districts of trucks traveling through downtown, the Verrazano Bridge is still a one-way toll, thus vehicles circumvent through downtown, NYU has a mega-development plan, problems with emergency vehicle access are of great concern, we have no full-service hospital, and increase in population requires schools and affordable housing.

9) NYU UPDATE - Hostile Takeover of the Village

District Leader and Community Board 2 Chair Brad Hoylman gave an update on NYU's mega-development plan to build 3 million square feet within a few blocks area.

Recently NYU says it wants easement rights to two park strips, down from seven public park strips it wanted to purchase. NYU wants to build four stories of space under each strip.

These strips would essentially be lost to the community and are not true easements. NYU will stage construction equipment on strips, have access to area below for repairs, have "rules", and the siting of the strips would likely be for NYU use only, not the public, even if intended to still be in the public domain.

DID again reiterates: For more than a year DID has asked our public officials to step in to stop New York University's non-contextual mega-plan to take over Greenwich Village and Washington Square Park.

We request our elected officials support those who elected them and ensure NYU seeks better alternatives.

10) HYDROFRACKING

An important public hearing will take place in NYC. We urge a large turnout! Please attend as this is the only public hearing to be held in NYC. November 30 at Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers Street, NY, NY 10007.

You may submit comments by email to the Dept. of Environmental Conservation: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/76838.html>

11) NYS ATTORNEY GENERAL

Attendees were informed of NYS Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's strong efforts on mortgage fraud settlements, Indian Point nuclear plant, and call for assessment of risks on hydrofracking.

Meeting adjourned 8:30 pm.

Additional items:

- Our Judicial Delegates nominated the following NYS Supreme Court Judges, First District, for the November Elections: Ellen Gesmer, Deborah Ann Kaplan, Annalisa Torres
- DID Fall Fundraiser will take place mid- November.

Join Downtown Independent Democrats! \$25 Individual, \$15 for Seniors & Students, \$40 Family. Visit didnyc.org

President Jeanne Wilcke
Vice President Adam Silvera