VID General Meeting Notes May 8, 2025

Co-president Sara Kimbell opened the meeting, welcoming everyone and outlining the agenda.

District Leader Jen Hoppe delivered her report, saying the State Party's Ethics Committee had come out with three suggestions in February to settle the dispute between Adriano Espaillat and the party. There was a vote but Jen abstained because she felt it was a personal matter between Adriano and County Leader Keith Wright. District Leader Arthur Schwartz made a resolution that the DLs had voted to enact, which Jen read. Jen asked Mar Fitzgerald if she could vote in Jen's place, but Mar had a conflict.

The County Committee will endorse a candidate for mayor, but no candidate has been chosen yet.

Nat Johnson made a report for the Environmental Committee, outlining four items:

1. Local Law 97 passed last year, limiting greenhouse gases emitted by large buildings, the city's top source of pollution, but the mayor created a loophole at the behest of the real estate lobby. It allows building owners to purchase Renewable Energy Credits (RECs), allowing them to buy their way out of obeying the law. Intro 1180 would close the loophole. Nat proposed a letter of gratitude to Councilmember Erik Bottcher for co-sponsoring the bill, and to ask him to vote against the Western Rail Yards rezoning plan which endangers the High Line Park.
2.

2. Nat thanked the City Council for funding community composting for Fiscal Year 2025, but that funding ends on June 30th. The Coalition is requesting $11.4 million to continue funding community composting through Fiscal Year 2026 and support organizations like the Lower East Side Ecology Center, Earth Matter, Big Reuse and BK Rot. He asked people to see the "Save Our Compost" website and testify at the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management hearing on Monday at 10 am.

3. There will be a Play Fair for Parks Rally and Executive Budget Hearing on May 13, sponsored by the New York League of Conservation Voters. The FY26 Executive Budget doesn't include funding for NYC Parks staffing and programs that have been identified as necessary for restorations. There is a testimony toolkit for those who wish to participate.

4. Recent studies have found small fragments of plastic known as microplastics in the human brain and heart arteries which have shown a link between their presence and adverse health outcomes. There will be a Beyond Plastics Webinar on this topic May 15, and you can register via zoom.

This was followed by Q & A.

Now Tony Hoffmann made his report for the Campaign Committee. He emphasized there were only a few weeks left before the election. The committee will be making a major mailing, twice the size of previous mailings. The target races are those of Brad Hoylman-Sigal and Mark Levine. He recounted the history of Dan Goldman—how VID endorsed him and he won largely because of VID's support. There will be campaigning on Saturday at Abingdon Square, and Sunday at Father Fagan Square for Chris Marté, another of our endorsed candidates.

Tony asked for an increase in campaign funding. This passed with 16 yeas and one abstention.

Sommer Omar of DID (Downtown Independent Democrats) made an update on the fight to save the Tony Dapolito Community Center. A year ago the Parks Department voted to demolish it, and an effort was made to form a coalition downtown to oppose it. But the city hadn't done the research to bring the building up to code. An allotment of $51.8 million was made for reconstruction—it could be used for demolition or reconstruction. Because the building is landmarked, the decision must go to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. The building provides public services: there is an indoor/outdoor pool, a basketball court, and a place for seniors to exercise—it is not okay for the city to destroy the building. Sommer read the letter that had been written and signed by 18 organizations to preserve and upgrade the building. She asked if VID wanted to sign it also.

After discussion, this passed unanimously.

John Bredin now made a proposal to start a new committee, Education, Culture, and Media. He gave a brief history of himself as an educator and member of the Executive Committee in VID, and various well known people who connected education to culture and democracy—like John Dewey, whose first book was "Democracy and Education." He spoke of the need for speakers and proposed Diane Ravitch as a possibility. He offered to chair the committee for a short time, and asked for volunteers. Sara said anyone interested could contact her.

Now Corresponding Secretary Caroline Donahue urged people to show up for the June 16 rally to protest the current regime and their policies. She emphasized the importance of making the rally the biggest ever and stressed its necessity.

Ben Yee, State Commiteeman, made an impressive presentation on Ranked Choice Voting, and explained its importance and how it can be used as a bulwark to keep unwanted candidates from winning. He likened it to a series of runoff elections, and explained the runoff system in France as an example. He explained how ranking your five slots can be used to your candidate's advantage, and clearly explained the process.

New Business:

Ben Yee reminded us that there would be a meeting of the State Party May 20-21 at the Long Island Marriott in Uniondale to address the more rural areas of New York and their issues.

The meeting was adjourned.