

Russell Squire
Chair

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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Voting Reform Task Force
Wednesday, April 20, 2022 6:30pm
*This meeting was conducted via Zoom***

MINUTES

CB8 Members in Attendance: Gayle Baron, Michelle Birnbaum, Lori Bores, Alida Camp, Ed Hertzog, Rita Popper, Elaine Walsh, and Shari Weiner. Valerie Mason and Anthony Cohn were excused.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 by Voting Reform Task Force Co-Chair Shari Weiner. She explained this meeting was a follow-up to last month's meeting which had a presentation by Dan Kaminsky from Citizens Union on the New York City Council redistricting.

The first order of business was a discussion on suggestions on how to proceed knowing that both City Council District 4 and City Council District 5 need to lose population. Shari shared Dan's comment that we could consider both districts together but at some point, would have to make separate recommendations for boundary lines for District 4 and 5.

A tally was taken of the CB8 members present as to which City Council district they live. The results were 6 members live in District 4 with 5 members living in District 5.

Each member of the Task Force was asked to review the criteria which will be used by the Districting Commission and the populations census data for each district and start thinking about new district lines to present at the next meeting.

The Districting Commission must present a proposed new districting map to the public by June 7, 2022. The Task Force will use the information gathered to provide input on this proposed map.

Shari then reported that the composition of the Districting Commission of the 15 commissioners only 4 were women. The Mayor appointed 3 women of his 7 appointments and the City Council only appointed 1 woman of its 8 appointees. Members of the Task Force expressed disappointment in the lack of gender equality in the commission. This was especially concerning that with a majority of women in the City Council. The lack of gender equality was a further concern when it was discovered that of the first 4 staff positions for the commission being Executive Director, Chief of Staff, Council and Deputy Council all were men.

Shari made a motion seconded by Alida that the Task Force write a letter to the Commission that in seeking qualified candidates, gender equality should be considered to ensure that a female prospective is included in staff comments to be presented to the Commissioners. A friendly amendment was made and accepted by Shari that the letter addresses not only gender equality but also racial and ethnic equality. The motion was passed. A copy of the letter from the Task Force on behalf of CB8 is attached to these minutes.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony Cohn and Shari Weiner, Co-Chairs

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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan**

April 27, 2022

Dennis Walcott, Chairman
New York City Districting Commission
253 Broadway, 7th Floor
New York, New York 10007

Re: Gender Equality in Staff Hiring

Dear Chairman Walcott:

The Voting Reform Task Force of Community Board 8 – Manhattan ("Task Force") strongly believes it is very important to have public input in the New York City Council redistricting process. To that end, the members of the Task Force are researching the legal criteria that guide how boundaries are drawn so its members can provide input on new district lines for City Council District 4 and City Council District 5 which are located in CB8's jurisdiction.

As part of its preparation, the members of the Task Force have looked into the makeup of the 2022 Districting Commission (the "Commission"). The members of New York City Districting Commission need to be diverse and representative of the population of New York City to provide fair representation. To accomplish this diversity and fair representation the selection of the Commissioners should have taken into consideration factors like gender, age, geographic representation and minority parties.

We are writing to express our disappointment and concern that though the appointed Commissioners do appear to represent racial and minority groups, in satisfaction of the Voter Rights Act, there is one group whose representation is not proportionate to the City's demographic—that group being women!

Though the current City Charter does not require the Commission to be representative in terms of gender, as women hold the majority of seats in the City Council, it is disappointing that the Commission does not reflect a similar commitment to gender equality! More upsetting than the Mayor's appointment of three women of a total of seven appointments, is the one woman of eight the City Council appointed!

Although women comprise 52.3% of the population according to the 2020 New York City census, that only 26.66% of the Commissioners are women does a disservice to the City in general, as well as to women. Women often approach problems differently and examine broader perspectives in decision-making. Surely, these are welcome, necessary perspectives for the entity charged with deciding which City Council districts belong to which geographic location.

Although we understand that the Commission is fully appointed and these Commissioners are unlikely to change, staff appointments have not yet been fully made, and are under the control of the

Commission. Our concern for this gender inequality was further raised by the first four staff appointments to the Commission for Executive Director, Chief of Staff, Counsel and Deputy Counsel, all being men.

At the first meeting of the Commission you indicated that additional staff will be hired to handle legal, technical matters and community outreach. While we encourage the Commission to hire the most qualified individuals for these positions, we urge that gender be taken into consideration to ensure that a women's perspective is represented in the preparation of staff comments to be considered by the Commissioners.

Thank you for your consideration of this very reasonable request. Please advise us on any action taken on this matter.

Sincerely,

Russell Squire

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Chair

Anthony Cohn and Sharon L. Weiner

Anthony Cohn and Sharon L. Weiner
Co-Chairs, Voting Reform Task Force

cc: John Flateau, Ph.D., Professor and Chair, Medgar Evers College, The City University of New York
The Honorable Adrienne Adams, Speaker, New York City Council, 28th Council District
The Honorable Julie Menin, NYC Council Member, 5th Council District
The Honorable Keith Powers, NYC Council Member, 4th Council District