

President's Column

By Lynn Kotler, CRDC President

On my way to work the other day, I stopped into one of my favorite delis, L & M, to pick up breakfast. While waiting, I started chatting with Larry, one of the owners, about business. Shrugging, Larry said, "Some days business is really good and other days, not so good. We are just trying to hunker down and weather the storm."

L & M, which has been operating in Chelsea since 1971, is just one of thousands of businesses battling through the present economy — hoping to survive. I recently walked down Eighth Avenue and counted twelve "for rent" signs between 14th and 23rd streets. Two of the five small businesses located on the block where I live closed in the past four months. Small businesses aren't the only entities suffering. Circuit City and Virgin Megastore recently closed down, resulting in the unemployment of thousands of individuals.

Our elected officials have proposed creative initiatives to assist local businesses, such as floor-area exemptions or density bonuses for developers that

allocate ground floor space for small businesses, an energy-cost reduction for start-up businesses, streamlining the permit-application program and requiring landlords to negotiate a fair rent or submit to mediation. These proposals are all forward looking and helpful. They are, however, presently just proposals. The reality is that unless we frequent our dry cleaner, deli, local restaurant, etc, these establishments may not be there next year, or even next month.

Times are hard for all. Local businesses know this and are offering all sorts of incentives to attract and maintain business. I implore you to take advantage of these discounts and, to the extent able, spend money. These businesses are the backbone of our community and must be supported.

Small businesses often provide great customer service and local character; don't let "mom and pop" businesses become a thing of the past, a nostalgic memory. In short, frequent those establishments, both big and small, that you want to see a year from now!

GENERAL MEETING

Note New Date:

**THURSDAY, MAY 28
7:00 P.M.**

Hudson Guild, 441 West 26th St.
(btwn 9th & 10th Aves)

ON THE AGENDA:

We will hear from candidates for Mayor and then endorse for the following offices:

Mayor, District Attorney, City Comptroller, and Public Advocate.

We will also hear from and endorse a Justice for the open seat in the 3rd and the 9th Judicial Districts

Please Note:

In order to vote you must have paid your 2009 dues. If you have not, you may pay at the meeting.

Results of the April 16 endorsement meeting for contested City Council seat in 3rd District:

Christine Quinn 42, Yetta Kurland 15
Jim Fouratt 2, Maria P. Durr 0

CRDC on Facebook

By David Caraway, CRDC 2nd Vice President

Dave Caraway is the administrator for the new CRDC group on Facebook. If you are on Facebook, you may simply type "CRDC" in the search box and the familiar and friendly CRDC logo should appear. Please click "join group."

At this point, there is no substantive information on the CRDC page, but there are over 200 pictures by member Jon Nalley of various CRDC events. The executive committee has decided that the Facebook group could be

useful as a supplement to the website and newsletter but should not replace or compete with them. Also, at this time, the Facebook group is open to anyone who wishes to join and, as of this writing, 24 various CRDC members, politicians and others have.

Please contact Dave at dacaraway@aol.com if you have any questions, comments, suggestions or concerns about the use of this tool to enhance the club's communication and organization.

We will keep you updated by newsletter and Facebook messaging if and when the functionality of the group page is expanded beyond its current very limited use.

Malcolm Smith: Abandoning NY Gays, Rights and Cash at the Altar

By David Caraway, CRDC 2nd Vice President

These are heady days in the fight for gay marriage. After state supreme court rulings requiring civil marriage equality in Massachusetts in 2004 and Connecticut in 2008, this past month has seen a powerfully-written and unanimous supreme court victory in my home state of Iowa,* as well as an inspired override of the governor's veto in Vermont. Colorado and Washington State expanded more limited partnership rights, and marriage equality battles are reaching a fever pitch in Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, California, and Washington D.C.

Which brings us to New York, a state we fancy a trail-blazer for freedom and equality, but which, sadly, has now become a laggard — not even present among the 11 states which give at least some statewide rights to same-sex couples. But a tipping point has been reached. In 2007, the NYS Assembly affirmed marriage equality by a surprisingly comfortable 85 to 61 vote. Unsurprisingly, Bruno's Senate let it die. Since that vote, a Siena poll shows that support for marriage equality in NYS has leaped 10% to 52%, with only 39% opposed and the 'ayes' beating the 'nays' in every region of the state.

In NYS, broad political and public support is not enough, with the NYS Senate being the slowest common denominator. Unfortunately, the new Democratic leader has continued the dreadful Senate tradition of only bringing votes to the floor when a win is guaranteed. This means the declared public yeses must beat the declared nos plus all the spineless representatives who will not commit as if voters have no right to know their positions. The end result is a "shrugger's veto."

With polls showing increasing and solid majorities supporting marriage, the risk of backlash is actually worse for those who vote 'nay' than for those who vote 'aye' everywhere in NYS. In at least 10 states over the past several years, there have been numerous senate and assembly votes on gay marriage and civil unions. Each and every time, the conservatives promised retribution, and each and every time, voters sent the pro-equality representatives back to power in greater numbers than they did for their opponents.

No matter the issue, making a declared majority a prerequisite before allowing a vote on issues which

have passed the Assembly is unconscionable and a glaring example of why Albany is so impotent. It's hard to get the two houses and Governor to agree on anything under the best of circumstances without giving a "shrugger's veto" to the noncommittal Senators. Smith's stance regarding marriage is callous to the gay community, costly at a time when a few extra tax and tourism dollars would be a godsend, undemocratic, and, I believe, unwise and short-sighted politically.

* Please Google "Varnum v. Brien" to read the inspired text of the ruling.

Chelsea Neighbors United to End the War

By Carla Nordstrom, CRDC Member

Tuesday, May 5th was the fourth anniversary of the Chelsea Neighbors United to End the War stand-up. For 208 weeks, neighbors and friends have stood on the corner of 8th Avenue and 24th Street on Tuesdays from 6 to 7 p.m. to remind our government we oppose the war and want the troops brought home now. Each week, we hand out a newsletter with an article written by one of our group (<http://www.chelseaneighborsunited.org/>).

While many stand-ups throughout the country, including Chelsea, Michigan, have stopped, we have chosen to continue our weekly stand-up until the wars end and the troops come home. This past winter was miserable but what we found is that people on the street, no matter how challenging the weather, agree with us that it is time to end the war.

Please join us on the corner of 8th Avenue and 24th Street on any Tuesday from 6–7 p.m. PEACE.

*Be the first to get your monthly
copy of the CRDC newsletter!*

Sign up to receive it by email when it is hot off the press.

Read it online, or print it in color, or black and white.

No more receiving your copy tattered and torn
(as many have been by postal delivery).

We emphasize the choice is yours!

If you prefer, we gladly will send it as usual,
by postal delivery.

If you want newsletter by email, print your name and
email address and email it to: info@crdcnyc.org

Shady Past... or Bright Future?

By Gloria Sukenick, CRDC Housing Chair

Well the future is not exactly looking bright...but as dark and shady as the '80's were, when it comes to housing that most people could afford, I clearly recall takeovers of buildings sitting empty by those who desperately need housing! It was in the '80's when there were "casitas" all over the Lower East Side's empty lots. Make a home wherever you can, and many did just that. Many others simply lived on the streets ... sleeping on the benches in Tompkins Square Park in full view of buildings filled with vacant apartments being warehoused. Landlords were keeping apartments empty in order turn their building into co-ops when there were enough vacancies to do so. The potential profits for landlords were, of course, enormous. The certain outcome for those without homes, was disastrous.

It's happening, once again, in the Bronx. Picture the Homeless, a group run by and for the homeless, planned to occupy a building that is currently empty and padlocked. Their plan was thwarted but, nonetheless, this is an indication of the desperation of the growing numbers of homeless folks who see little or no plan coming from the city, or anywhere else, that addresses their needs.

Earlier this year, Borough President Scott Stringer's office did a survey of vacant properties in Manhattan and found that the empty property could accommodate 24,000 housing units. The result has been a series of stalled bills at the City Council that would begin to deal with this problem. There has been some discussion of the city coming up with an idea about doing something with all those newly constructed and very empty luxury units that might become available at non-luxury prices. But that is still just an idea.

So, as I walk down 8th Avenue in Chelsea, I see more and more homeless people ... informal homeless encampments, including one man who has turned his broken-down station wagon into his home. Others who have taken shelter under less-than-cozy sheds surrounding new construction. There are always a few people once again found camping in the subway station. But there is a bit of hope that the buildings at Chelsea Elliott parking lot and at Fulton Houses will prove to be really affordable. More about that as things develop.

All in all ... the way we're going right now, the future is not looking too sunny. Anyone got any ideas?

Keep fighting!

Another View on Term Limits

By Carla Nordstrom, CRDC Member

I support term limits for all elected offices. Since the City Council and Mayor preempted the voter's choice to impose term limits on elected officials, I have heard people say, "While I personally don't support term limits, the voters made it very clear that they support them." Frankly, I'm getting fed up with this argument because it allows people to take a moral stand without thinking about why term limits might be a good idea.

Years ago, I thought that imposing term limits was a conservative creation. If the voters really wanted change, they could always vote an elected official out of office. The only problem is that few are voted out of office, no matter how incompetent they are or how dysfunctional their branch of government is. Through redistricting and election laws, politicians have established a system that insures that they keep their jobs. The system is broken and term limits is one approach to address the problem.

For some, elected office has become a lifelong appointment. It is not good for our government, no matter how competent the office holder is, for an elected official to spend an entire career in one office. Our state legislature is a perfect example, we have a very good state assemblyman, who joined the legislature straight out of college and has just reached retirement age. While he may be excellent at his job, the legislature itself is dysfunctional and ineffective; I think that we would all benefit from new blood in Albany.

The Mayor, not the voters, told us that term limits had to be rescinded because times are tough and we couldn't change course during an economic downturn. I guess George Bush could have made the same argument for another term in office. To me, the time when we really need a change in personnel is when things are not working, whether it is the fault of the people in office or it has to do with outside influences. The worst time in my memory for our city was after 9/11 and changing administrations did not make the situation any worse than it already was. With new sets of eyes, there were improvements.

Another approach to fixing government and the election process might be to pay elected officials the minimum wage that they legislate. That would certainly create a refreshing change in our elected representatives unless you are a mayor whose personal wealth quadrupled during his eight years in office

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Chelsea, Madison Sq., Flatiron, Rosehill



County Committee: It Really Does Matter

We are finalizing the list of candidates for the Democratic County Committee. If you have not returned the yellow post card which was confirming your participation once again please do so immediately. If you have lost the card please contact Tom Schuler at 212-924-5920.

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Questions? Call 212-924-5433, email us at info@crdcnyc.org, or visit our website at www.crdcnyc.org