



Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2024 District Leader Candidate Questionnaire

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Please answer each of the following questions to the best of your ability:

1) Why do you seek an endorsement from CBID?

CBID is unique among Democratic Party organizations in that it has for years consistently promoted democracy and progressive politics, while at the same time been very active and involved in our community. As such, it has built a well-earned reputation as a principled, active political club. A CBID endorsement, therefore, is special and meaningful, and I would be honored to receive it.

2) Will you vote for Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn to be Chair of the Kings County Democratic Party, if she seeks renomination? Please explain your answer.

Never. She has demonstrated a disrespect for democracy, inclusiveness and progressive reform, or even having a dialogue with those of us who believe in those values. BUT, voting against her renomination is necessary, but not sufficient. A reform DL from our district who really wants change must be willing to organize for it, call meetings with fellow reform DLs, plan for those meetings, and, more than anything, try to win over those DLs who are not now with us, but who are willing to listen and may be converted to our side. Also, as an activist DL, we must present the county with an alternative, rather than simply a negative vote, as we have witnessed a long succession of County Chairs who are similar to our present Chair. A vote alone may feel good, but does not accomplish what is needed.

3) What do you think are the most important responsibilities of a district leader?

In any true democracy, a leader is a representative of the voters who elected her/him. While there is always some discretion and independence involved in any such position, a DL must seek the advice, sentiment, and preferences of those voters. DLs must also educate the district's residents to the issues and choices to be made. For example, local land use and development are a critical area where a DL needs to convene meetings within the district with voters to discuss what position to take. Also, a DL must meet with district elected officers such as the AM, CM and Senator to be briefed and to relay their constituent's sentiments. When I was in AD52 (prior to redistricting), my DLs regularly convened meetings of county committee members and rank n file voters. These were invaluable.

Most importantly, the DL MUST be willing to attend meetings of the State Committee and to be part of the progressive block of other SC members who share, and are willing to dialogue over, the commitment to the same democratic and progressive principles which he/she are fighting for within the County. It makes no sense to replace an undemocratic and unresponsive County Chair while not actively campaigning and organizing to replace a similar state party Chair, especially when the damage done by the current State Chair consisted of handing over control of the House to the pro Maga GOP.



4) **What changes would you like to see in the operation of the county organization and its rules? What would you like to stay the same?**

The most important change is to bar, or severely restrict, the use of proxies. This is the chief mechanism by which undemocratic County Leaders maintain control over the County Party and frustrate the will of the majority. When I was elected to the County Committee, the first meeting was in a huge auditorium at Kings County Community College. Some 500 newly elected and mostly first time members attended. The meeting was delayed for 4 hours without explanation (by the County Leadership or by the organizers of this large group). When the meeting finally convened, the 500 of us was OUT VOTED by the County Chair, who waited until he had enough proxies to do so. With zoom and with members all residing within Kings County, there is no need for proxies.

The second change is to have meetings at times and places easily accessible to members. During a work day is simply a way to discourage attendance.

I am still searching for something to stay the same.

5) **What, if any, groups or organizations will you not accept campaign contributions from?**

Not that I expect to ever be offered their support, but I would not accept contributions from real estate developers or their organizations, the NRA, racist, sexist or homophobic orgs, or AIPAC and its affiliates, to name a few.

6) **Do you support an active Assembly District Committee (ADC) in your Assembly District? Would you support an ADC that operates independently from AD leadership (Assembly member and/or District Leaders)?**

Yes and yes, but I would have to be assured that such committees are structured and function democratically and truly represent groups of voters, and are not a front group for some special interest (like a real estate developer).

7) **What County Committee proxy reforms do you support?**

See my answer to #4, above. Unless I can be shown some legitimate, democratic purpose for proxies, they should be eliminated on a countywide basis. On the statewide level, whether a



restrictive use (such as to make quorum) is necessary remains to be seen, but proxies must be curtailed as a vehicle to maintain undemocratic control over proceedings.

8) Do you support a party platform for the Brooklyn Democratic Party? If so, what two or three principal goals should be included in that platform?

I consider this essential. Goals and Principles which should be included:

1. Commitment to democratic functioning, both on the state and county levels.
2. Support for public and affordable housing
3. Support for unions, reform of labor laws, and the principle of collective bargaining.
4. Since Brooklyn is a diverse borough consisting of many ethnic groups, protecting and promoting immigrants and their rights is essential.

9) How do you engage in your community now? How do you foresee engaging in your community as District Leader?

In the past, I have organized and participated in meetings of activists who are willing to lobby their elected officials in support of legislation for voter reform, attend rallies (such as one I helped organize in opposition to the GOP's attempt to repeal the ACA. Moreover, I have spent countless hours campaigning for progressive candidate such as Public Advocate Jumaane Williams.

10) What is your position on the current land use and zoning struggles in your district?

This is a critical function of the DL which I take very seriously. As such, I am in the process of learning more updated, factual and community preference information about such projects as the Arrow Factory development by consulting with the relevant elected officials such as Assembly Member Carroll and Council Member Hanif and any Community groups involved in the process. Once I have completed that review, I can come to informed positions on such projects.



11) District Leaders and the Kings County Democratic Committee Executive Committee have the power to recommend commissioners and other staff hires to the Board of Elections. In what ways would you use your position as District Leader to increase transparency in the commissioner selection and hiring processes for the BOE, and professionalization of the BOE generally? What, if anything, would you do differently than your predecessor to ensure fairness and transparency in the hiring of poll workers?

The current BOE and the rules for its functioning have to be dramatically changed. First, it is one of the prime examples of patronage by party leaders who reward loyal followers. Appointments should be made by a non-partisan body to begin with.

The current system has also produced a state BOE which is arrogant and whose members feel they are above the law. For example, the legislature passed a law requiring the BOE to implement an online registration system by a date certain, and the BOE simply refused to do so. In 2020, the BOE CANCELED the presidential primary (on the theory that the candidates opposing Biden had suspended their campaigns) even though the primary was needed to elect the delegates who sat on committees of rules, platform, etc. I organized a lawsuit and was one of the plaintiffs which sued the Board in federal district court (joining a pending suit by the Yang campaign). We won in the trial court and in the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals, and the election went forward.

Re the hiring of poll workers, I have to admit that I didn't know about that function until recently so before I take a position I would like to better familiarize myself with the current practice. I would welcome hearing from CBID what suggestions you may have to improve the process.