



Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2022 District Leader Candidate Questionnaire

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Office Sought: District Leader

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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?

Neighborhood clubs like CBID are the best place for individuals to plug into neighborhood issues and build political power inside their own communities. CBID has a rich history of organizing in Central Brooklyn and an expertise in County Committee Reform Politics.

A goal of my campaign is to keep individual Democrats engaged with the political process throughout the year, and connect them with both existing organizations and wider boroughwide reform movements.

I would encourage Central Brooklyn Residents to join CBID and be active in CBID and I would also be an ally to all CBID members in working to help move the reform movement across the borough.

An endorsement of my candidacy would create a partnership amongst reformers of which we can all cooperate and coordinate the reform movement across the borough.

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

I would not. Two core values I have when it comes to the County Committee are empowering the Committee members and connecting with underserved communities. The current chair's leadership has worked against both of these values.

The current Chair has limited the power of County Committee Members to meet, organize and elect leadership. I was one of the plaintiffs on the lawsuits that occurred after the County Committee Organizing Meetings. The lawsuits held County Leadership accountable and ruled in favor of conducting a meeting of the County Committee and to hold an election of County Committee Officers.

The Democratic Party also needs to make a concerted effort to reach out to marginalized communities, especially the Asian American Community, throughout Brooklyn. We have been losing Asian American voters to Republicans at an alarming rate.

Given the current climate of violence against the AAPI community, it is important we have leadership that can speak to and relate to these issues. However, this past cycle, we have seen county leadership react slowly and defensively over another Executive Committee member who expressed Anti-Asian speech. Instead of quickly addressing the issue, the leadership attempted a half measure of removing the individual from the largely ceremonial Vice Chair Position rather than calling for a full resignation, which occurred shortly after.

This kind of leadership does not align with the values we hold and will not appeal to the marginalized communities we need as part of our coalition to defeat Republicans at the polls.



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

I believe District Leaders represent both the County Committee members and the everyday voter. They do this by being part of the Executive Committee of the Party and also in organizing their own districts.

They should **create and support organizing structures**, like organizing an Assembly District Committee in their districts.

They have a key role in **partnering and strengthening relationships among reform organizations and elected officials**. Within AD52, we have a number of reform-minded organizations that should and are working together in boroughwide reform goals. If elected, I hope to play a large role in strengthening these relationships.

And finally, they should **bring transparency to the traditional work of District Leaders**

This includes, support staffing of poll workers and holding forums for Judicial elections where voters can meet and talk to candidates seeking a Judicial office.

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?

We must make the party accessible to its grassroots members. Rules should be changed so that meetings are held more than once a year, including upon the request of a certain percentage of the members. Members should be allowed to bring resolutions to the floor and hold leadership elections.

In terms of operations, I would like to see the party operate as an organizing base for Democrats in Brooklyn. I would support the formation of Countywide committees that can focus on specific organizing goals, *like reaching underserved communities in the Asian American Community*. This would also require creating committees that do the on the ground campaigning work, like fundraising and financial oversight.

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

I will not accept donations from corporate PACs, or individuals or organizations that have supported or promoted hateful speech or politics against any marginalized group, nor any friends of family members of judicial candidates.

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)?

Absolutely yes. This is essential. I helped form our ADC in AD52 in both 2018 and 2020. I do believe that County Committee members deserve their own space to organize and empower themselves. As District



Leader, I would encourage cooperation between District Leaders and ADC members. In AD52, where the reform movement is already strong, more cooperation can only help us reach our goals.

7) What County Committee proxy reforms do you support?

I oppose the Automatic Proxy Rule. I don't believe proxies should be assigned directly to District Leaders by default. County Committee members should have control over whom they sign their proxy over to.

Digital proxies should also be allowed in addition to paper proxies.

The number of proxies carried by one individual should also be limited. We should be encouraging and incentivizing active participation, so proxies should not be allowed to significantly outweigh the active participants in the room.

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?

Yes. I would like to encourage **increased voter turnout, especially in marginalized communities**, such as our NYCHA developments. We have seen low turnout in elections during 2021, in no large part because we lack the strong community based roots in these communities. **Winning back seats against Republicans** should also be a goal in the borough.

Lastly we should **inform voters what is on the ballot**. This means voter education in DL races, Judicial Races, and ballot initiatives. We lost voting rights reforms during the last cycle because of lack of investment in this area by the current party leadership.

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

I've been an active member of County Committee in the past I have been:

- At the both the 2018 and 2020 Organizing Meetings
- A RepYourBlock Assembly District Organizer in 2020 where we successfully recruited more than 100 candidates in the 52nd AD. This is an example of the community based approach I believe in
- Entrusted with the responsibility of being one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuits filed after the 2020 organizing meeting, to hold County Leadership accountable.
- One of the founders of an ad hoc organization in the district called the Basement Group. This organization consisted of mostly first-time County Committee members who were interested in forming an independent ADC in the 52nd
- On the team of the people who helped organize our ADC both in 2018 and 2020.

I would build on this type of work in the County Committee by encouraging a strong relationship between the ADC, elected officials and political clubs such as CBID. My goal would be to partner with the ADC as a vehicle to get more engagement amongst County Committee Members and to reach out to potential new members.



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

I believe District Leaders can play a role in helping define, educate and bring new voices into the discussion of these complex issues.

Land use and zoning must be thought of as a balance between building more housing units, and building more affordable units for local residents. Environmental concerns must also be taken into account. Superfund cleanup is a key concern of the Gowanus Rezoning. And looking forward we should be thinking about where we are building our new housing units and the investment needed to make them livable in a changing climate.

Public housing should be a priority. We have an existing obligation to clear the backlog of NYCHA repairs through public funding but also look to new models of ownership that provide opportunities for community members to have a say and own their own properties.

Lastly, the BQE reconstruction has shown that we need better models for community input. Community Boards are one direct model, but are not representative of the entire community. The ULURP process is complex for most citizens to engage with, and District Leaders can not only help demystify this process, they can help engage citizens with alternative community input methods.

12) 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?

First off, the Board of Elections should be run by professionals, not party officials. This current model of vague accountability between BOE officials and District Leaders makes it so that poll workers and the voters do not have clear lines of responsibility to address their issues. District Leaders can work with City Council members, who hold a vote in approving BOE Commissioners, to ensure that Commissioners are professional and not selected based on party affiliations.

District Leaders can also help hire more qualified individuals as poll workers and also partner with outside groups with expertise in voting rights to help build an infrastructure for training poll workers.