



Community Board 12 - Manhattan Washington Heights & Inwood

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Eleazar Bueno, Chairperson
Ebenezer Smith, District Manager

May 15, 2020

Hon. Gale Brewer
Manhattan Borough President
1 Centre Street, 19th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: RESOLUTION OF COMMITMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY IN CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT THAT ENCOURAGES AND SUPPORTS GREATER DIVERSITY, INCLUSION & COLLEGIALLY.

Dear Borough President Brewer:

At the General Meeting, Tuesday, February 25, 2020, Community Board 12 Manhattan, passed the following resolution with a vote of 32 in favor, 1 opposed, 5 abstentions.

Whereas: The Manhattan Borough President's Office (MBPO) issued a letter dated October 29, 2019 that detailed the findings of a seven-month investigation it conducted into a complaint of alleged gender discrimination by former Board Chair Richard Lewis filed by one of our female Board Members; and

Whereas: The investigation substantiated that Mr. Lewis blocked or removed two female Board Members from leadership roles on the Board, and the report stated that the MBPO learned about the removal of another female Board Member as Chair from a Committee during the course of the investigation; and

Whereas: The investigation concluded that Mr. Lewis demonstrated a pattern of disparate treatment toward women during public meetings; and

Whereas: The MBPO report recommended that Mr. Lewis complete several remedial steps that include: completing a training course on creating a more inclusive environment for women on the Board, the importance of gender diversity and representation of women in organizations; and engaging with Board leadership to ensure women currently serving on the Board remain engaged and active participants; and

Whereas: Community Board 12, Manhattan (CB12M) as a Board and its Executive Committee must take collective responsibility for a culture that allowed and enabled those actions; and

Whereas: Inclusion requires that the appointment process, which is controlled by the Borough President and City Council Members, assures that the Board itself is appropriately diverse in its membership; and

Whereas: The Board recognizes that concerns about gender diversity must be intersectional, with the term "intersectionality" alluding to the visual image of roads intersecting, and that was first coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a black law professor at Columbia University, to define the ways in which multiple social identities (gender and race) uniquely impact Black women. The term has been expanded to include a variety of other social characterizations (including ethnicity, age, class, sexual orientation, gender identity/non-conformity, religion, citizenship status, ableism, etc.) that compound to create systems of discrimination or advantage greater than any of the individual social identities could on their own. As Crenshaw stated in a Columbia Law School website interview: "Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things"; and

Whereas: No Black women - despite being members of the Board and despite black people making up 7% of the Washington Heights and Inwood community - currently serve in any Board leadership roles (elected offices and committee chairs); and

Whereas: CB12M has the most self-identified Hispanic Board Members (51%) of any Community Board in Manhattan, but that number is still much lower than their percentage of the community population (69%); and

Whereas: The Executive Committee, representing Board leadership, should be accountable in ensuring the Board operates in a way that supports gender diversity, overall inclusiveness, and with a sense of civility, collegiality and cooperation among all Board members in this and in any future Board administration; and

Whereas: The current Board Chair, Eleazar Bueno, has provided redress to the two women named in the report who were officially declared harmed by the actions of his predecessor by reappointing Deborah Nabavian as Chair of the Traffic & Transportation Committee and by appointing Tanya Bonner as Assistant Chair of the Business Development Committee; and

Whereas: CB12M strives to be diverse, inclusive, equitable, and representative of its District, but the investigation by the MBPO found evidence of gender discrimination in appointments to Board leadership, and the MBPO have offered to assist the CB12M Chair and, by extension, the Board in "creating a more inclusive Community Board environment"; and

Whereas: CB12M held a Board retreat on November 11, 2009 that was effective and well received, and that involved discussion of topics such as "spheres of influence, best practices, and how we work together," according to a report about the retreat from then-Chair Pamela Palanque-North, that was included in the November 24, 2009 General Meeting minutes; now, therefore be it

Resolved: CB12M accepts the offer by the Borough President, which could include her assistance in organizing a retreat to be attended by Board members aimed at improving our ongoing working relationships, engagement, inclusion, and retention of members and training in gender diversity; and be it further

Resolved: CB12M will conduct a thorough review of its current leadership structure to determine ways to create more opportunities for intersectional female leadership on the Board in the near future; and be it further

Resolved: CB12M will commit to regular Board retreats at an annual or biennial time period determined by the Board, recognizing the reality that Board efforts around issues of diversity, inclusion and collegiality require ongoing work in order to be maintained; and be it further

Resolved: CB12M will investigate the possibility of establishing an Ethics & Grievance Committee that would serve as a place to hear and review concerns around Board processes and actions, and that would make (if necessary) recommendations for change; and be it further

Resolved: CB12M shall establish a formal process to address concerns raised by Board staff regarding racism, sexism, ageism, xenophobia, trans-/homophobia, ethnocentrism, classism, and other forms of discrimination or misuse of power and privilege; and be it further

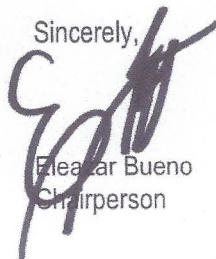
Resolved: CB12M will provide immediate and timely additional redress to the women named in the report who were officially deemed harmed by the actions of Mr. Lewis (should the women so desire); and be it further

Resolved: CB12M expects the Executive Committee and all Board Members to behave in a manner ensuring that an inclusive, diverse and collegial environment is always maintained on the Board in the future within the scope of our bylaws; and be it further

Resolved: All current CB12M Executive Committee members shall undergo implicit bias training facilitated by external entities and new Executive Committee members shall undergo such training upon being elected or appointed; and be it further

Resolved: CB12M will make any changes necessary to ensure the bylaws support such inclusivity, diversity and collegiality.

Sincerely,



Eleanor Bueno
Chairperson

cc: Deirdre Lyles, Director, Human Resources and Operations, MBPO Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member
Adele Barnett, General Counsel, MBPO Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member