



Forest Hills Green Team Primary Election June 2022

The Forest Hills Green Team has a commitment to civic engagement. We are providing this information as you prepare to vote in the upcoming primary. Since most people are aware of the elections for the Governor, Lieutenant Governor; and Assembly member, we are focusing on other elected positions that are appearing on your ballot. We will provide a brief explanation about these positions and highlight the two different slates that are running for these positions.

- I. ***New York State Democratic Party*** - Nominates candidates for Statewide offices, such as Governor; Lieutenant Governor; Senator; Attorney General; Comptroller. Also, elects party leadership that serves as a voice for State Democrats.
- II. ***Queens County Democratic Party*** - Engaged Democrats are the heart and soul of our party. If you are looking to get involved in politics, now is the time to make your voice heard and your vote count. We endorse and support Democratic candidates at every level of government who share our goals of ensuring a brighter and more equitable Queens County.

Judicial Delegates - Instead of running candidates for Supreme Court judgeships, Democrats vote for judicial delegates who attend a convention to nominate the actual candidates for the general election.

County Committee - The statewide parties in New York State are governed by Committees of citizens who are registered voters of their respective parties. Currently, in Queens County, there are 1080 members of the County Committee and 1647 vacancies. The County Committee meets once every two years to elect leadership for the Queens County Democratic Party.

- III. ***Civil Court Judges*** - Civil Court judges hold 10-year terms and have sway over thousands of cases a year where disputes involve \$50,000 or less, a new threshold doubled by voters last year. After a judge joins the bench, the Office of Court Administration often transfers the jurists to serve in other courts, as well, including Family Court and Criminal Court, or as an Acting Supreme Court Justice.

The two Slates who are running candidates in our district for all these positions:

New Reformers - Are a group of residents and activists in the community that are fighting to build a party that is transparent; and inclusive and thus actually reflects the diversity of our community.

Queens County Democratic Party - This slate supports the principles discussed previously.

New Reformers Slate

Male - Raj Korpan
Female - Maria Kaufer

County Slate

Male - Edwin Wong
Female - Ronnie Croce

State Committee:

Judicial Delegates

Heather E. Dimitriadis
Karen Bass
Alison C Abulafia
Peter W. Beadle
Ariel B Feldman
Howard Wong
George Anthony Korpan
Eric S Arnum
Jeremy Buchman
Raj Korpan

Karen Koslowitz
Matthew M. Mandell

Mark E. Morrill
Sandra S. Mandell
Mary Ellen G. Courtney

Catriona Schlosser
Sheryl Ann Fetik
Steven Strauss

Alternate Judicial Delegates

Soumaly King
Ximena M Frankel
Richard Nunez-Lawrence
Jordi Kaufer
Mark Laster

Ronnie Croce
Marsha Silverstein
Myrna Jacobson
Howard Pollack
Sheridan Chu
Martin I. Cohen
Michael Cohen

County Committee

ED 30 Female

Soumaly King

Sandra Mandell

ED 32 Female

Maria Kaufer

Naomi Altman

ED 31 Male

John Kaufer

Steven Strauss

ED 32 Male

Jordi Kaufer

David Strauss

ED 40 Male

Jeremy Buchman

Sheridan Chu

Civil Court Judge

Devian Davis
Maria T Gonzales

Karen Lin
Thomas Medardo Oliva

Statements from Candidates

The Forest Hills Green Team contacted all the candidates listed above, asking them to respond to two questions. Maria Kaufer responded regarding both State Committee and County Committee; Raj Korpan responded regarding both State Committee, Judicial Delegate and County Committee; Edwin Wong responded regarding State Committee; Heather E Dimitriadis responded regarding Judicial Delegate; Sheryl Fetik; Eric Arnum and Jeremy Buchman responded regarding Judicial Delegate and Mark Laster responded as an Alternate Judicial Delegate. All were asked the following 2 questions: 1. What are your thoughts regarding the direction of the New York State Democratic Committee?(This was asked for the four candidates running for the State Committee. As for positions for the County Committee, the first question is: What are your thoughts regarding the direction of the County Committee?

2. If elected, what are your plans to engage the community?

Maria Kaufer for State Committee

1.As with the Queens County Democratic Party, the New York State Democratic Party also functions in an anti-democratic manner. The State Party suppresses Democratic member knowledge, engagement and participation, and it, too, places its considerable thumb on the scale by endorsing candidates for statewide offices in primary elections. Last year the State Democratic Party even went so far as to WITHHOLD SUPPORT in the General Election for the Democratic Nominee (elected by Democratic voters in the primary election!) for Mayor of Buffalo because the winning candidate was not the one endorsed by the State Party in the Primary Election! All New York State Democrats deserve better. We deserve the opposite of autocracy; we deserve a State Party that operates democratically and is worthy of its name.

2.Along the same vein as in my questionnaire for County Committee Member, I plan to work with other State Committee Members and grassroots, good government groups like QCC4ALL and New Reformers, to effect reforms to the functioning of the State Democratic Party. We need to level the playing field so that our State Party is inclusive, accessible to all, accountable to its members and the general public, and operates in an open, transparent manner.

Community engagement will be manifested in organizing voter registration and GOTV drives, town halls and meetings with local Democratic clubs/groups, candidate forums/debates, field activities/support for endorsed candidates, webinars and meetings on important issues of interest to our communities, rallies, letter writing and phone calls to action for issues/policy advocacy, and collaborative organizing with movement partners across the State and Country to build strong, people-powered coalitions. Please check out my Facebook page, Maria Kaufer for New York, to learn more.

Raj Korpan for State Committee:

1.I believe the New York State Democratic Committee should be more responsive to community and grassroots organizers. Right now, many state committee members are beholden to the establishment and party machine. It should have the courage to stand up to abuse and bullying (which it did not do during Governor Cuomo's term). The state committee should also stay out democratic primaries so that the voters get to decide who the democratic nominee will be, unlike the current practice of the state committee.

2. I will hold events and forums with organizations around AD 28. I will solicit the needs of our community and advocate for those needs. I will also reach out to elected officials and collaborate where possible to address the needs of our community

Edwin Wong for State Committee

1. Below is part of an email that was sent out earlier this year from the NY State Democratic Committee. It speaks to the direction of the NYS Democratic Committee in terms of embracing our diversity so all can be heard which I agree with." In light of recent events, it is important to spend some time on self-reflection. To that end, we want to remind ourselves of "Why I Am A Democrat." The Democratic Party is a big tent party. We are defined by our diversity. And in reminding ourselves of why we are Democrats, we must strive to ensure that we provide opportunity for our diverse base to be heard. Here in New York, we have one of the most diverse populations and we need to represent all of us. 2022 is not the time for complacency and we will fight GOP hypocrisy and lies. We are proud to launch the following Caucuses to join our Progressive, Rural, and Young Caucuses:

- AAPI Caucus; Hispanic Caucus; Black Caucus; LGBTQ+ Caucus; Muslim Caucus; Jewish Caucus Disability Caucus; Small Business Caucus

2. Even though this is a party position I will engage with everyone in the community as I believe we need to listen to all opinions within the community irregardless if we agree. I will attend democratic club meetings and provide updates on NY Stat eDemocratic Committee meetings. I will participate in community events and encourage community members to become more involved with the political process and engage with their electeds on all levels. I will speak with small business owners, religious institutions, community based organizations, families, seniors, professionals and all residents. I will also participate with the recently announced AAPI Caucus to increase awareness amongst the AAPI community about the NY State Democratic party

Heather E Dimitriadis for Judicial Delegate:

1. There is a need for increased transparency and consistency across the organization. Far too many times endorsements are made by Queens Democrats that don't reflect the priorities and sentiments of the Democrats in Queens County. Those endorsements are a powerful tool that impacts the direction our state, city, borough and neighborhood takes. History shows that political parties are always in a state of evolution. Yet, there seems to be an effort by Queens Democrats to keep the party stagnant by refusing to embrace new ideals. Our hope is that over time we can create a more transparent, engaged, and representative Democratic party here in Queens.

2. Knowledge is power. The goal is to engage Democrats and de-mystify how local politics work and promote engagement in the local civic life.

Sheryl Fetik for Judicial Delegate

1. My name is Sheryl Ann Fetik. I have been an elected Member of the Queens County Democratic Committee in Rego Park since 2016, and in years before this period. A lifelong resident of Rego Park, I have been actively involved in my community, for much of my life. I have helped others to become Members of the County Committee. This year, I am running for re-election to the County Committee, in the 42nd Election District of the 39th Assembly District, and for Delegate to the Democratic Judicial Convention, in the 28th Assembly District. I am opposed for County Committee, by a candidate who was put up by a local District Leader. This County Committee candidate doesn't live in the local community, or even in the Assembly District, as is required by the Election Law. It is possible that she is not involved in her candidacy at all. The County Committee is important because it serves as the core of the local political parties, and its rules are contained in both the party rules, and in the Election Law. When in session, the County Committee contains nearly all of the power of the local political parties. In the past,

the Members of the County Committee served as the eyes and ears of the parties, as liaisons with the community. They were sometimes called Precinct Captains.

In recent years, only a few people have run to be on the County Committee. This gives the rest of the party structure more power. Elected Members of the County Committee are elected at primary elections. Then these few people choose to nominate and vote for others to fill the vacancies that exist. According to the Democratic Party rules, only 25% of the Members of the County Committee need to be elected.

As it should be, there is a preference in the Election Law, for Members of the County Committee to reside in their own communities. There is a requirement, even in reapportionment years, for Members of the County Committee to reside in their home Assembly Districts.

Some of the problems with what currently occurs, and what can be done about it: I have raised each of these concerns in the past.

* Currently, the Queens Democratic Party takes nominations for the County Committee from the local District Leaders, both for the elected positions, and for those who fill the vacancies after the Primary. This is not a bad thing, but there should be more emphasis on including people in the Party, who wish to be active and involved in community and political affairs.

* According to the Democratic Party rules, any elected Member of the County Committee may make nominations to fill vacancies in the County Committee. I have made nominations to fill vacancies, on a number of occasions. Lately, this provision has been ignored, and nominations by Members of the County Committee have been ignored. We should go back to giving the Members of the County Committee more ability to be involved and have a voice.

* We should be encouraging people to run for County Committee where they live. It is legally permissible to be a Member of the County Committee, while residing anywhere in the local Assembly District. I believe that leaders in various political parties sometimes deliberately nominate for County Committee, in areas outside of the candidate's immediate Election District, because this gives them more power. Sometimes, as in my current primary for County Committee, the District Leader nominates someone who doesn't even live in the Assembly District, contrary to legal requirements. This takes away power from the local community.

* Once chosen to be a Member of the County Committee, the Members should be able to communicate with each other, and with the Party. This is currently difficult, because there is no overall list outside of the Board of Elections, on a website, or elsewhere, for County Committee Members to even know who the other Members are. I have made suggestions about this in the past, and the rules of the Party may need to be changed to provide for this. With greater communication, the County Committee could have more input, and even arrange to have more meetings than the one scheduled once every two years. In the past, there were sometimes additional involvements of the County Committee.

* Some of the rules regarding ballot access should be simplified, so that people can be more involved in their Political Party and government.

2. I am very active and outspoken, in community and political affairs. I intend to continue my involvements, and to include other people, whenever this is possible. Among other things, I have been advocating for improved health care, and fighting against hate crimes. With regard to the County Committee, I have and will continue to help others to become Members of the County Committee, and to be informed and actively involved in our community.

Eric Arnum for Judicial Delegate

1. Until recently, I had never heard of the county committee or judicial delegates, or the fact that many such positions go unfilled either by election or appointment. But thanks to the outreach efforts of the Central Queens Independent Democrats, and after watching Fahim Hamid's documentary "County," now I know how dysfunctional the Queens County Democratic Party really is. The thing is, it's not beyond hope, and it could be reformed from the inside if enough people step up to fill these low-level party positions. And that's why I'm here. I would like to see more progressive candidates elected to leadership party positions, and I want to make it easier for ordinary citizens like me to step up and run for what are essentially thankless unpaid volunteer positions in the county and state party system.

2. If elected, I plan to continue taking part in local elections, stepping up my involvement with the City Council elections scheduled for 2023 and the state and federal elections in 2024. Typically, I look for local progressive change-makers such as Jessica Ramos, Tiffany Caban, and Sandy Nurse, and do everything I can to get them first past the post. When I'm not working for candidates (but when is there ever a time with no upcoming elections?) I plan to continue working with climate activists groups such as the Forest Hills Green Team, Reverb.org, 350NYC, and Extinction Rebellion, to try to prevent the climate calamity that seems to be just ahead of us this summer. In New York City, we do this through advocacy for local laws that ban new gas-heated buildings, encourage the installation of heat pumps, mandate both residential and commercial refrigerant recycling, make food scrap pick-ups and drop-offs for composting convenient and easy, and make alternatives to combustion-driven cars and trucks widely-available and affordable. We encourage investments in solar and wind power, particularly on rooftops and offshore, and we rally against the bankers, investors, insurers, and financiers of fossil fuel projects. After all, we're in the financial capital of the world, and that's where the money is!

Jeremy Buchman for Judicial Delegate

1. Like any object, the Queens County Democratic Committee will remain at rest until acted upon. The Committee's operations have repeatedly proven impervious to bad publicity (e.g., committee members living in Florida unaware of their holding office; tightly controlled Committee meetings leaving no opportunity for meaningful input from Committee members). The only way to bring small-d democracy to the QCDC's operations is to elect committee members who will insist on transparency and accountability.

2. Encourage people to take advantage of existing forums for exercising voice (e.g., Community Board meetings, participatory budgeting) and Social media outreach, both to mobilize the politically active members of our community and to engage those who are more disconnected.

Raj Korpan for Judicial Delegate and County Committee:

1. The Queens County Democratic Committee should have the power to set the direction and goals of the Queens Democratic Party. The committee is truly one of the most local forms of democracy in our country. Each committee member represents their small few blocks of Queens. Altogether, the county committee consists of active community members, and their voices represent the diversity of our county. Instead of encouraging and enabling the value of this group, the Queens Democratic Party has instead co-opted its power, and left body as a pro-forma rubber stamp of approval. Power should be bottom-up, not top-down. As a county committee member, I will advocate for my neighbors and fight to reform the Queens Democratic Party.

2. As a county committee member, I will engage my neighbors with targeted outreach. I plan to organize events around civic engagement and voter turnout. I would also like to engage with the community on issues important to me, such as LGBTQIA+ rights and racial and environmental justice.

Mark Laster for Alternate Judicial Delegate

1. When I first attempted to run for County Committee in 2018, my petitions were challenged by lawyers from the County Committee, and I was thrown off the ballot along with 50 other activists. Given most seats of the County Committee remain empty, I do not understand why people who spent hours getting on the ballot only to be thrown off due to a technicality. I am running for Alternate Judicial Delegate to assure there is transparency in selecting Supreme Court Judges.

2. As a County Committee member, I have been canvassing my election district and plan on holding a meeting with people in my district to discuss their thoughts about the direction of the County Party. As an Alternate Judicial Delegate, I plan on working with others to make this process more transparent.

Maria Kaufer for County Committee

1. The Democratic Organization of Queens County continues to function in an opaque, top-down, and anti-democratic manner. The Party continues to suppress Democratic member knowledge, engagement and participation as well as put its considerable thumb on the scale by endorsing candidates in PRIMARY ELECTIONS. Queens Democrats deserve better. We deserve the opposite of autocracy; we deserve a Party that operates democratically and is worthy of its name

2. I plan to continue to grow the movement that neighborhood friends and I started in 2018 along with allies across Queens, as outlined in QCC4ALL's open letter to Chairperson Gregory Meeks <https://link.medium.com/vrNouCWm1qb>. I will also continue to work with New Reformers (I served as a New Reformers Board Member in 2020) and our local, active Democratic club, Central Queens Independent Democrats (CQuID) (I was a founding member of the Club and currently serve as Club President), to continue to build a bottom-up, participatory Democratic Party that practices the democratic values of transparency, inclusiveness, accessibility and accountability. Community engagement will be manifested in organizing voter registration and GOTV drives, candidate forums/debates, field activities/support for endorsed candidates, webinars and meetings on important issues of interest to our communities, rallies, letter writing and phone calls to action for issues/policy advocacy, and collaborative organizing with movement partners across the neighborhood, County, City, State and Country to build strong, people-powered coalitions. Please check out my Facebook page, Maria Kaufer for New York, to learn more.