

Bylaws Working Group

The Bylaws Working Group (“BWG”) of Community Board 2, Manhattan (“CB2”) held a virtual meeting via Zoom on November 22nd at 6:30 pm.

Committee Members Present: Susan Kent (Chair), Katy Bordonaro, Michael Levine, Matthew Metzger

Committee Members Absent with Notice: David Gruber

Other CB2 Members Present: Carter Booth, Valerie De la Rosa, Jeannine Kiely, Donna Raftery

Agenda: Discussion of Bylaws Article 1 (Membership).

This meeting’s focus was on Art. 1, sec. e, which addresses board members’ responsibilities when making public statements that conflict with the official position of CB2. It was noted that the text of sec. e only refers to statements made before government bodies and makes no mention of other forums. There was unanimous agreement that this section should not be limited to a government context, but that there must be a uniform standard that applies to members’ speech, regardless of forum or format. Furthermore, it was agreed that the bylaws should cover all statements made by CB2 members related to the board’s activities, not merely those on identified topics.

There was also consensus that the key aspect of any disclosure by a CB2 member is whether they have been “designed” to speak on behalf of the board. This is critical to establishing the distinction between personal and official statements, and to preclude the public from erroneously assuming that any time a member of CB2 speaks, they represent the board. The BWG recognized that the situation can be further complicated by the fact that many CB2 members participate in multiple community organizations, and at times it may not be clear from the context in what capacity someone is speaking. It was agreed that the bylaws should reflect that it is the responsibility of CB2 members to anticipate such potential ambiguity. Also, CB2 members should be encouraged to refer any press inquiries to the board office; members should not feel obligated to respond to off the cuff questions from the press or the public.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Kent, Chairperson