



University Student Senate
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MINUTES OF THE EMERGENCY PLENARY MEETING OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK UNIVERSITY STUDENT SENATE

HELD ON ZOOM

APRIL 11TH, 2021 AT 12:00 PM

I. ROLL CALL

Present Steering Committee Members:

Juwanie Piquant: Chairperson
Joel De La Cruz: Vice-Chair for Fiscal Affairs
Sara Ortiz: Vice-Chair for Graduate Student Affairs
Amber Rivero: Vice-Chair for Senior Colleges
Alexia Christopher: Vice-Chair for Community Colleges
Brandee Simmons: Vice-Chair for Part-time and Evening Students
Vanella Douglas: Vice-Chair for International Affairs
Aharon Grama: Vice-Chair for Technology Fee Affairs

Present Delegates & Alternates:

Joel De La Cruz (Delegate, Baruch College);
Yehuda Wexler (Delegate, Baruch College);
Richard Reyes Romero (Second Alternate, Baruch College);
Nicholas Ali (Graduate Alternate, Baruch College);
Jacob Tidwell (Graduate Alternate, Baruch College);
Josiah Ramesar (Delegate, Borough of Manhattan Community College);
Quintasia Harris (Delegate, Borough of Manhattan Community College);
Monira Begum (First Alternate, Borough of Manhattan Community College);
Brandee Simmons (Second Alternate, Borough of Manhattan Community College);
Gabriel Morillo (Delegate, Bronx Community College);
Christopher Soto (First Alternate, Bronx Community College);
Aharon Grama (CLAS Delegate, Brooklyn College);
Ethan Milich (SGS Delegate, Brooklyn College);
Elmi Jimenez (Delegate, City College of New York);
Shza Zaki (Delegate, City College of New York);
Sofina Tanni (First Alternate, City College of New York);

Andrew Salmieri (Second Alternate, City College of New York);
Nicole Agu (Delegate, College of Staten Island);
Petra Gregory (First Alternate, College of Staten Island);
Shawn Abraham (Second Alternate, College of Staten Island);
Sara Ortiz (Graduate Delegate, CUNY Graduate Center);
Dannelly Rodriguez (Graduate Delegate, CUNY School of Law);
Nerdeen Mohsen (Graduate Alternate, CUNY School of Law);
Bonaparte Pierre (Delegate, CUNY School of Professional Studies);
Justin Sanchez (Delegate, CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies);
Eriam Lopez (Graduate Alternate, CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies);
Muhammed Tekanyi (Graduate Delegate, CUNY School of Public Health);
Jeraine Nieves-Morales (Delegate, Guttman Community College);
Charles Dour (Delegate, Hostos Community College);
Brian Carter (Delegate, Hostos Community College);
Monsita Colon (First Alternate, Hostos Community College);
Kayla Benjamin (Delegate, Hunter College);
Alexis Fisher (Delegate, Hunter College);
Devashish Basnet (First Alternate, Hunter College);
Hannah Kavanagh (Second Alternate, Hunter College);
Tayvhon Pierce (Delegate, John Jay College);
Amber Rivero (Delegate, John Jay College);
Avijit Roy (First Alternate, John Jay College);
Andrew Berezhansky (Second Alternate, John Jay College);
Saaif Alam (Graduate Delegate, John Jay College);
Sharon Solomon (Graduate Alternate, John Jay College);
Alexia Christopher (Delegate, Kingsborough Community College);
Annette Cruz Gonzalez (Delegate, LaGuardia Community College);
Mary Rodriguez (Delegate, LaGuardia Community College);
Fehim Hoti (First Alternate, LaGuardia Community College);
Tsering Lama (Second Alternate, LaGuardia Community College);

Jainee Carrasco (Delegate, Lehman College);
Cristian Valdovinos (Delegate, Lehman College);
Gugeeta Cheetram (First Alternate, Lehman College);
Sumana Ali (Second Alternate, Lehman College);
Kenneth Lee (Second Alternate, Medgar Evers College);
Juvanie Piquant (Delegate, NYCCT);
Ngozi Okonkwo (Delegate, NYCCT);
Vanella Douglas (First Alternate, NYCCT);
Frankie Lachapelle (Second Alternate, NYCCT);
Alihaider Hassan (Delegate, Queens College);
Joseph Cobourne (Delegate, Queens College);
Enrique Peña (Second Alternate, Queens College);
Arnab Sharma (Delegate, Queensborough Community College);
Wayne Dawkins (Delegate, York College);
Tiandra Thompson (Delegate, York College);
Deanna St Hillaire (First Alternate, York College);
Aarionna McGlashing (Second Alternate, York College);

University Student Senate Staff:

Jasper Diaz, Legislative Director

CUNY Central Office of Student Affairs:

Joseph Awadjie, University Liaison to the University Student Senate

University Faculty Senate:

Professor Kimora, Member of the Executive Committee (EC) of the CUNY University Faculty Senate (UFS)

Professor Hugo Fernandez, CUNY University Faculty Senate (UFS)

Guests:

Mark Roy, York College

Call to order:

Chairperson Piquant called the meeting to order at 12:30 PM and begins opening remarks.

AGENDA

- I. ROLL CALL
- II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA
- III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES
- IV. APPROVAL OF RESOLUTIONS
 - A. Condemning Anti-Semitism and Supporting the CUNY Jewish Community
 - B. Supporting CUNY's Jewish Community, Working to Build Meaningful Mechanisms to End Racism and Bigotry and Opposing the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism
 - C. Flexible Grading Policy for the Remainder of the Pandemic
 - D. Demanding a Safe Vessel for Hudson Yards
- V. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT
- VI. OPEN TABLE
- VII. ADJOURNMENT

I. ROLL CALL

48 Voting Members and Alternates Present, 46 Voting Members and Alternates Absent. Quorum reached in order to proceed with the meeting and for voting purposes.

II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Sen. Saaif Alam from John Jay College moved a motion to approve the agenda. Sen. Shawn Abraham from College of Staten Island, second. Vice Chair Aharon Grama from New York City College of Technology motions to move the table to bring forth the resolutions brought forth by Vice Chair's Amber Rivero of John Jay College and Joel De La Cruz of Baruch College, and that it be referred to a committee made up of the members Sen. Nerdeen Mohsen of CUNY Law, Sen. Amber Rivero of John Jay College, Sen. Ethan Milich of Brooklyn College, Vice Chair Sara Ortiz of CUNY Grad Center, Vice Chair Sumana Ali of Lehman College, Vice Chair Joel De La Cruz of Baruch College, and Sen. Yehuda Wexler of Baruch College. The chair of the committee will be determined by an internal committee vote, will follow executive session rules and will not discuss publicly its progress. Sen. Ethan Milich from Brooklyn College second the motion. Sen. Alihaider Hassan from Queens College motions to approve members of the USS Ethics Committee. Vice Chair Grama explains reasoning behind his motion that the resolutions should be referred to a committee which will eventually make a new full recommendation, and that the plenary should only be voting on one recommendation made by that committee (due to contradictory resolutions currently being introduced). Discussion on motion follows. Sen. Dannelly Rodriguez from CUNY School of Law motions to end debate and move forward with a vote, Sen. Annette Gonzalez from LaGuardia Community College second. The motion fails with roll call vote of 20 yays, 11 nays, and 6 abstentions. The motion does not carry. Chair Piquant continues meeting with the Speakers List. Plenary then moves to a vote in regards to Vice Chair Grama's motion to refer both resolutions to committee. The motion fails with roll call vote of 10 yays, 26 nays, and 3 abstentions. Chair Piquant moves to add the appointment of Fidel Osorio as

interim Parliamentarian, to the April 11th Plenary Agenda. Vice Chair Grama second. Motion passes unanimously. Vice Chair Grama motions to move the adding of members of the USS Ethics Committee to the end of the Plenary Agenda. Vice Chair De La Cruz second.

Chairwoman Piquant reaffirms USS Plenary will be voting on Sen. Hassan's motion to add members to the USS Ethics Committee. Vice Chair Grama's motion was to amend Sen. Hassan's motion and move the approval of additional Ethics Committee members to the end of the Plenary Agenda. Chairwoman Piquant asks if anyone wishes to second this motion. Vice Chair De La Cruz second. Motion passes with 1 nay vote. Chairwoman Piquant moves to approve the USS April 11th Plenary Agenda. Sen. Gugeeta Cheetram second. Motion passes unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF INTERIM PARLIAMENTARIAN

Vice Chair Grama motions to approve the appointment of Fidel Del Osorio as Interim Parliamentarian. Sen. Cheetram second. Motion passes unanimously.

After much discussion on procedural issues, Chairwoman Piquant moves a motion for the Plenary to go into recess. Sen. De La Cruz second. Sen. Petra Gregory motions to end debate, Vice Chair Vanella Douglas second. Motion to end debate is approved unanimously. Chairwoman Piquant moves to hold voice vote for the Plenary to go into recess. Motion fails followed by roll call vote. The motion fails with 4 yays, 31 nays, and 1 abstention.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Chairwoman Piquant states that minutes were not finalized and USS Plenary will need to approve in upcoming emergency meeting. Vice Chair Grama moves to table the approval of the minutes, Sen. Cheetram second. Motion passes unanimously.

V. CONFIRMATION OF APPOINTMENT OF ADDITIONAL VOTING MEMBER TO USS ETHICS COMMITTEE

Chairwoman Piquant moves to discuss the approval of adding Sen. Shza Zaki to the USS Ethics Committee. After agreement on qualifications and merits of adding Sen. Shza Zaki to the USS Ethics Committee, the chair moves forward to add Sen. Zaki as a voting member to the committee. Vice Chair Grama second. Motion passes unanimously.

VI. APPROVAL OF RESOLUTIONS

A. CONDEMNING ANTI-SEMITISM AND SUPPORTING THE CUNY JEWISH COMMUNITY

Chairwoman Piquant moves to allow the sponsors of the resolution to speak. Sen. Yehuda Wexler motions to add amendment to resolution, Vice Chair De La Cruz second. Sen. Wexler presents on resolution. After debate, Vice Chair Grama motions to refer the newly amended resolution to a proposed committee, Sen. Milich second.

After considerable debate both on the nature and substance of the resolution, in addition to procedural matters and subsequent consultations with Interim Parliamentarian Osorio, Sen. Vanella Douglas motions to end debate. Sen. Cheetram second. Motion moves to a roll call vote. Motion fails along 27 yays and 5 nays, with 5 abstentions. Speakers list and debate resumes. Sen. Rivero wishes to motion to keep speakers list allotted time per speaker to one minute. Interim Parliamentarian Osorio clarifies that motion would only pertain to this particular item. Motion passes unanimously. Speakers list closed.

Chairwoman Piquant moves to hold a vote on the Sen. Yehuda Wexler's amendment to the resolution. Motion proceeds to roll call. Motion fails with 9 yays, 1 nay, and 27 abstentions.

Chairwoman Piquant announces we are back to the original resolution. Vice Chair Grama motions to table the resolution to either the Legislative Affairs committee or an ad-hoc committee composed of the members mentioned earlier (see beginning of Section II: Approval of the Agenda). Vice Chair De La Cruz second. Sen. Rivero motions to keep speakers list allotted time per speaker to one minute. Sen. Andrew Berezhansky second. Sen. Rivero's motion passes with 1 nay vote. Chair Piquant moves to roll call vote for Vice Chair Grama's motion to table the resolution. Motion fails 6 yays, 22 nays, and 6 abstentions.

Chairwoman Piquant announces that we are back to debate. USS Legislative Director Jasper Diaz clarifies that we still currently have quorum.

Chairwoman Piquant moves to roll call vote on the approval of the resolution. Motion fails with 1 yay, 19 nays, and 11 abstentions.

B. SUPPORTING CUNY'S JEWISH COMMUNITY, WORKING TO BUILD MEANINGFUL MECHANISMS TO END RACISM AND BIGOTRY AND OPPOSING THE IHRA WORKING DEFINITION OF ANTISEMITISM

Chairwoman Piquant announces that we will be moving to review the resolution. Sen. Petra Gregory motions to approve, Sen. Andrew Berezhansky second. Debate proceeds. Sen. Saaif Alam moves to limit time per speaker on the speakers list to one minute, Vice Chair Grama second. Motion passes unanimously. Speakers list resumes.

Sen. Nerdeen Mohsen motions to end debate, Sen. Alexis Fisher second. Vice Chair Grama calls for a Division of the House. Roll call vote on ending debate proceeds. Motion fails with 25 yays, 6 nays, and 2 abstentions. Discussion continues. After much debate the speakers list finishes and Chairwoman Piquant moves for a roll call vote on the approval of the resolution. Motion fails with 21 yays, 5 nays, and 4 abstentions.

C. FLEXIBLE GRADING POLICY FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE PANDEMIC

Chairwoman Piquant yields the floor to Vice Chair Sumana Ali to explain the resolution. Vice Chair Ali provides an overview of the resolution. Vice Chair Grama motions to approve the resolution, Vice Chair Sara Ortiz second. Floor opens up for discussion. Sen. Saaif Alam clarifies that this resolution pertains for the remainder of the pandemic while classes remain virtual until in-person classes resume.

Chairwoman Piquant moves for a vote to approve the resolution. Motion passes unanimously.

D. DEMANDING A SAFE VESSEL FOR HUDSON YARDS

Chairwoman Piquant yields the floor to Vice Chair Sara Ortiz to explain an overview of the resolution. Vice Chair Ortiz provides an overview of the resolution. Vice Chair Grama motions to approve the resolution, Sen. Shawn Abraham second. Floor opens for discussion. Motion passes unanimously.

VII. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Chairwoman Piquant gives report and announces April 25th Emergency Plenary to nominate individuals interested in running for Vice Chair of Disability Affairs due to sudden vacancy.

Chairwoman Piquant acknowledges the challenges and importance of self-commitment when it comes to delegates representing their campuses. Importance of understanding our history as an institution and remembering why we are here. Despite the challenges, we stay committed to doing the people's work. Reviews historic achievements during the pandemic of the current state budget session such as three year tuition freeze, \$500 TAP Award increase, and funding to close the TAP Gap in 4 years and for mental health services. Achievements are years in the making and thanks everyone for showing up. At USS we represent all CUNY students. It is ok to disagree but important to stay connect to the moral common good of this organization, for us to commit to doing this work. We are powerful and strong when we are united.

In lieu of regular zoom office hours, Chairwoman Piquant encourages delegates to call or text her during that time.

VIII. OPEN TABLE

Sen. Brandee Simmons spoke about how women are treated within the organization and wanted to shed light on messages she had received so that the Plenary body would be aware of her disappointment and the changes that need to be made. The matter was referred to the USS Ethics Committee to be further investigated. Reflections from several USS Senators regarding today's plenary and debate over resolutions.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Chairwoman Piquant adjourns the meeting at 6:21 PM after it is established that the Plenary no longer has quorum after several delegates had to leave.