

**January 12, 2021
General Meeting
Josephine County Democrats (ZOOM)**

During the business portion of the meeting a flag salute and approval of the agenda and December minutes were held. Approximately 41 people attended through ZOOM.

Treasurers Report: Treasurer Collette Storms reported that more money came in than went out last month. Revenues included a refund on the electric signboard at the fairgrounds. The current balance was reported at \$10,092.

Action:

1. Resolution to add Treasurer Colette Storms to the First Interstate Bank account and to remove Brian Clark was approved. See Resolution attached.
2. Three new PCPs were voted on and approved. New PCPs are: Jerry Allen, Mark Mason, and Vickie Palmerton.

Chair's Report: Chair Dorothy Yetter announced the Executive Committee decided elected officers will not hold caucus or committee chair positions, in order to bring newer members with new ideas into organizational planning and activities. The Executive Committee also decided, pending a change in the bylaws, to make the chairs of all those caucuses and committees part of the Executive board.

Regarding state matters, Dorothy said she participated in a leadership call with the DPO and learned Oregon contributed more than \$24,000 to the senate races in Georgia, with 161 volunteers contributing their time. That doesn't count all the local volunteers, however, so there were many more throughout Oregon's counties. Dorothy said some PCPs statewide had expressed a fear of having their addresses out in public. There is a way to hide your addresses on state lists, she said. Concerning the state legislature, the public won't be allowed inside the building during floor time or committee meetings but can participate virtually.

In the coming days leading up to the Inauguration in Washington DC, several events will be held. The 18th will be a Day of Service. Dorothy urged Democrats to donate or participate in helping the Food Bank. She will find out what they need. January 19th will be a COVID-19 Memorial Day. People are being urged to put a light in their window that evening and ask those in public buildings to do so as well, especially the Courthouse. Josephine County Democrats will have an Inauguration watch party Wednesday January 20th. Details are still being worked out. There is a web site where people can leave a video of themselves congratulating Biden and Harris: <https://stories.bideninaugural.org/landing>

Membership Report: Geri urged PCPs and Neighborhood Leaders to engage their neighbors to make them aware of the issues important to Josephine County and just to keep in touch between elections. She has designed envelopes for this project and will make templates

available. She reminded those present that so many people contacted express gratitude they are not alone in this predominantly conservative county.

Geri said the plan is to send two newsletters a month out, with short informational notices in between if needed.

Environmental Caucus: Chair Rick Flora said a caucus meeting has been set for 6 pm January 21. Members of his caucus have been working on projects like sustainable farming and various forestry issues. Member Lynda Spangler added there are a variety of environmental issues to explore and invited new members to pick something they'd enjoy working on.

Health Caucus: Lacy Porter has expressed interest in getting that going. Jerry Allen and Barbara Villona said they would join.

Guest speakers at the meeting were **Public Safety Chief Warren Hensman** and **Dr. Bruce Murray** who runs the COVID contact tracing program for Josephine County and advises Public Health.

Hensman gave a short biography of himself, grew up in Dublin Ireland, and became a police officer after a stint in the military. He started in Fulton County in Georgia, moved on to Las Vegas where he was a detective working on mob cases, then went back to school, graduating from UNR with a master's in management. Raising two boys, Hensman and his wife wanted to settle in a good place for them, so ended up in Ashland where he was deputy chief of police until taking the chief position in Grants Pass a few years ago. He said his philosophy with his staff is to build trust and therefore legitimacy of their work in the community. Asked if his department is doing anything special regarding political unrest surrounding the upcoming inauguration, Hensman said he is monitoring intelligence and doing what he always does: keeping an ear to the ground and an eye on what's going on. Regarding COVID in the community, he said everyone in his department wears a mask, and he recently got his first COVID vaccination.

Substance abuse keeps his department busy but he does have a response team trained to deal with out-of-control drunks and addicts. He says the sobering center is a big help in dealing with people who would otherwise be put in jail cells and he hopes that doesn't lose funding in the city's budget cuts. What he would really like to have, he said, is a place where people picked up raving in the streets could go for a week's intervention with medical attention. Beds alone aren't the answer to the problems of addiction. A facility is needed to get these people to the point where they can move on. Hensman said he agreed with incarceration reforms, saying being mentally ill isn't against the law and they shouldn't be in jail, they need a facility where they can get help, recognizing some mental illness is caused by drugs that have destroyed some people's chance of recovery. Regarding the rousting of the homeless from city parks, Hensman said a city ordinance prohibits camping in parks, but people are being allowed there for now under conditions imposed by the city. The city has an appeal of a judge's ruling that a city must allow sleeping in parks if it has no shelter and his department is awaiting a ruling on that which will determine the fate of park camping.

Dr. Murray, an internist at the Grants Pass Clinic until he retired, then trained to spot pandemics and worked around the world at refugee camps until returning during the COVID crisis to volunteer for Public Health, said the CDC's disjointed rollout of the vaccine is a national embarrassment. He emphasized he isn't a spokesman for the Public Health Department, but his observations have him shaking his head. Oregon is down in the 40s as far as priority for getting vaccine shipments, he said, and the state still has a ways to go to get all its 1A people (healthcare workers) vaccinated. Oregon has not demonstrated a lot of coordination regarding vaccine rollout either. It was pointed out that legislators should be contacted to urge them to improve the distribution organization. Getting people to accept the vaccine once it is readily available is another issue and why Dr. Murray said he goes around doing informational meetings like the one tonight. The Ashland, Medford, and Grants Pass area is the area in the state where the most anti-vaxxers are, but as the vaccine rolls out and more people get the vaccine without harm, he said he expects more to participate. He said he doesn't blame people for having reservations, since the vaccine was rolled out so quickly and the long-term effects haven't been studied, but he doesn't anticipate any problems with this type of vaccine unless someone has a particular allergy that results in a reaction.

Dr. Murray said Josephine County is a challenging community for doing contact tracing with some days going well and others bogged down with a lack of cooperation. He was asked if he's willing to do some virtual town hall meetings...he replied he would as he and other Public Health officials are constantly on the radio and at meetings like this one, trying to get accurate information out to people and dispel some of their false beliefs and fears.

Drive-by vaccinating isn't ideal for this vaccine because of the possibility of allergic reaction, he said. He'd hate to have someone have a reaction out on I-5 after getting through the drive-by. People do need to hang around about 15 minutes after a vaccination just in case they have a rare reaction.

People in Josephine County seemed to have lost the will to do all the protocols that would help reduce the spread of COVID, Dr. Murray said, and he speculated the case numbers are probably 3-5 times higher than the official count. He said the United States is in poor company right now, in the top 5 nations with the highest caseloads, right along with Mexico, Brazil and India. "We did just about everything wrong," he said about this country's first encounter with the virus...and politicizing wearing a mask and other protocols didn't help, he added.

Testing remains less than optimal, with newer quicker but slightly less reliable tests coming out to help. Dr. Murray says he has seen people come out with a positive test, then go to other test sites until they get one that says they're negative. He said people should stick with their first test result because shopping around just helps spread the virus more.

He cautioned people not to think that getting a vaccine will suddenly make them safe from the virus. No one knows how much protection is afforded by the first dose, and the second one, about two weeks later, won't be fully protective until about four weeks afterward. Meanwhile, we need to do as much as we can to keep the virus from spreading for the sake of our

overworked medical staff, bed availability, and for those with non-COVID medical problems who aren't getting the level of attention they need.

Following the guest speakers, a short discussion period was held but interrupted by a power glitch at Dorothy's house. She said she will send out a survey to see if people want to gather soon to continue discussing what we can do about our elected officials who still support Trump after his obvious seditious behavior and impeachment.

Resolution

Resolved: That the authorized signatories to all accounts at First Interstate Bank be changed to reflect the results of the December Reorganization election.

Resolved:

- That Brian Clark, no longer serving as Chair, be removed as an authorized signatory on the mentioned account.
- That Colette Storms elected as Treasurer be added as an authorized signatory to the mentioned accounts.

Resolved: That as from January 1, 2021 any funds of the Josephine County Democratic Central Committee deposited in the said bank accounts be subject to withdrawal at any time via check, debit card, or wire transfer by:

- Dorothy Yetter, Chair
- Lynda Spangler, Vice Chair
- Colette Storms, Treasurer
- Lynda Demsher, Secretary

Resolved: That the resolutions be passed and remain in full force and effect until further notice in writing shall be given to First Interstate Bank.