

Minutes

Josephine County Democrats

March 9, 2021

General Meeting (ZOOM)

After a discussion concerning the difficulties people were having getting a COVID vaccination, and the flag salute, the meeting began shortly after 7 p.m. The agenda and minutes were approved. In Treasurer Colette Storm's absence, Chair Dorothy Yetter reported we haven't spent much in February beyond regular office expenses. She said our bank balance is \$10,487.00.

Dorothy announced we have a slight bylaws change that will require a vote by PCPs next month. The change allows all committee and caucus chairs to be part of the Executive Committee. The notification will be sent out in our newsletter.

Chair's Report: Legislative updates include redistricting with some concern the city of Ashland will be taken out of CD2. We don't know yet if we'll get one or two new districts, based on population growth. The Democratic Party of Oregon is in the process of elections. KC Hansen is running for Chair again. She has one opponent, John Knight. Hansen has much support among Southern Oregon Democrats because she visits here and helped with a successful fund-raiser for Josephine County in September 2019. Proposed party resolutions include honoring essential workers, labor unions and anti-Asian American discrimination.

Reports:

Communications – they are in the process of updating our vision and mission statements. They want them to reflect a strategy of moving forward to help the community. They will be putting out a link to survey membership on what we should prioritize in our goals. Newsletters will come more regularly, with deadlines for committee and caucus members who want to submit announcements, activities and events on the 2nd and 17th of every month. Geri Ventura reported the Neighborhood Leader Program is gearing up for the May election to support any Democrats running.

Health Caucus – They met recently to talk about advocating for more mental health services, especially for the homeless. They've also been working on holding a ZOOM town hall featuring local doctors on the importance of getting vaccinated for COVID. They would like more people to join since there are many important health-related issues going on in the community now.

Environmental Caucus – Joe Stodola reported they are meeting twice a month and discussing global and local issues. Films about interesting takes on environmental issues have been popular during one of the monthly meetings.

Campaign Committee – Joey DeShields said he has been spreading the word on various board vacancies and elected positions coming up and has reached out to incumbents on school boards known to be Democrats. Filing for the May 18 election ends March 18. Phone bank volunteers will be needed for the May election.

Speakers: Catherine Thomasson, DPO Environmental Caucus Vice-Chair, spoke about HB 2379, the severance tax bill introduced in this year's legislative session in Oregon. As a revenue bill, it requires a three fifths vote. She said Oregon had such a tax passed in 1929 to separate the value of the land from the timber being cut, but that tax, a significant portion of county income, shrank over the years and was finally abandoned. If reinstated it would add about \$758,000 to Josephine County's budget. Jerry Allen said he feared a timber tax would get counties "addicted" to timber and our forests would continue to be logged. He said a coalition of people who use the forest for things other than logging, such as hikers and fishermen, is needed to provide perspective. Lynda Spangler said the county owns a lot of timberland with receipts going to help fund juvenile justice and CASA so it would be difficult to ever get that land preserved. Jean Mount added that it's ultimately up to the citizens to push elected leaders toward preservation.

Josephine Democrats Environmental Caucus Chair Joe Stodola talked about past climate catastrophes that we were able to correct, such as: the Dust Bowl in the 1930s, corrected by better soil conservation practices in agriculture, DDT, the pest spray farmers were using up to the 1970s that was found to be killing off birds, corrected by banning its use and bringing some species back from near extinction, freon in sprays causing a hole in the ozone layer that has improved since the use of that was reduced, asbestos, which caused disease until it was banned from use as an insulating material, tobacco causing lung diseases mitigated through education, smog greatly reduced through improvements in auto standards and the destruction cause by using Agent Orange during wars. Environmental harm can be reduced or eliminated. We have proved it before, and we can do it again, he said.

Jerry Allen, an Environmental Caucus member, talked about Regenerative Agriculture and what's happening with geothermal energy. With Regenerative Ag people can reduce CO2 in the atmosphere by covering large fields with mulch or crushed basalt which has multiple benefits including increasing soil nutrients and could be used for carbon credit. Enhanced use of geothermal energy can be done in many places by drilling deep into the earth and using a closed-loop system to create electricity. Oil people know how to do deep drilling, it would create jobs as fracking winds down and can utilize newer plants using coal to produce energy. Klamath Falls already utilizes geothermal energy to heat its sidewalks in the winter. Eastern Oregon is prime for this kind of power generation. He said geothermal energy is not meant to replace wind or solar but could be part of a multi-system energy plan that has backup in case one system is affected by weather or other factors.

After a question-and-answer session with topics ranging from no-plow farming to biochar, a method of burning waste to use for soil regeneration, the meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.