

Minutes

June 8, 2021

Regular meeting of the
Josephine County Democrats
ZOOM

During a brief business meeting PCPs present approved the agenda and the minutes from the last meeting.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Colette Storms reported that we had a good month in May, with donations covering the expenses of our texting campaign before the May election. Our beginning balance was \$10,314 with an income of \$1,565 and expenditures of \$1,345. The ending balance for the month was \$10,534.

Announcements: A fund-raiser is being planned for the next meeting at the Taprock Northwest Grill's Hospitality Room. Because of the room availability the meeting will be held the second Wednesday in July instead of the usual second Tuesday. People can order dinner from a limited menu during the event July 14 beginning at 6:30 pm. This will be the first in-person gathering for the Democrats since COVID began more than a year ago.

Chair's Report: Chair Dorothy Yetter said during a leader's call with Secretary of State Shemia Fagan they learned her mission this year is to build trust in government. She listed four ways to improve trust, being honest about Oregon's history, enhance corporate transparency in elections, audit public services to make sure help is going to those who need it most, and combat misinformation about our state's election process. Fagan noted in Oregon only one in four people believe their vote counts. Fagan also told the county chairs she started her involvement in politics by running for her local school board and encouraged leaders to get on local committees and boards. Dorothy also announced that next June 19, or Juneteenth, will be a state holiday known as African-American Independence Day. It was on this day in 1965 when slaves in a remote part of Texas were finally told they were free two years after the Emancipation Proclamation. Other news from the leader's call was during the annual DPO Wayne Morse Gala fund-raiser Democratic National Committee Chair Jamie Harrison praised Oregon's Neighborhood Leader program saying it was phenomenal what Oregon does with it. The next SEC meeting will be June 27 at noon which Dorothy said is interesting even if you aren't a delegate and the Josephine County Clerk is looking for people willing to count ballots during the next election. She will post information about this on our media.

Speaker

Grants Pass City Councilor Vanessa Ogier, who represents Ward 4 in the city, gave a rundown of what she has been doing since January when she was sworn in. She said the first thing she was hit with was the \$2 million budget deficit and she fought hard to keep everyone employed and the Women's Crisis Center funded. The biggest challenge now is finding a place for the city's unhoused. Twice now attempts at setting up a shelter have fallen through, both caused by owners

backing out of selling to the city for that purpose. She said the Council is in the process of establishing a Housing Advisory Committee and hiring a Housing Director. They had a candidate for that newly created position but he backed out when he couldn't find housing, she said. The city is still looking for land for a temporary camp for the unhoused, but zoning and proximity are issues to be resolved even if land becomes available. Housing problems took a long time to get to this point, Vanessa said, and it will take some time to unpack it. Ogier also discussed how the city plans to spend American Rescue Plan funds, the prevalence of contracted services, preserving wetlands in the urban area, "affordable housing" and efforts to clean up the environment. She said the city plans to bring a consultant in from the Resource Assistance for Rural Environments to help the community with environmental planning. Questions generated a lively discussion about the religious group disrupting the Growers Market and the county commissioners' support of educators who came out against legislation requiring schools to have a plan for LGBTQ students. The Commissioners have been critical of the City Council and Vanessa said part of the reason is the last election resulted in a paradigm shift in the city's focus and concerns. Several people thanked Vanessa and the Council for "getting things done." She said she used to just get involved in national politics, then started paying attention to state politics but decided if she was going to have an impact on people's lives local politics mattered. She urged everyone to get involved, even if it's just being on a committee, because local politics is ultimately what affects you and your family.

Caucus and Committee Reports: Communications Committee Chair Patty Downing said they have assumed responsibility for strategic planning and will work on that during a meeting on Sunday, June 13 from 1-4 pm at Dorothy's house. Those attending will bring potluck dishes to share for an outdoor picnic. They are expected to come up with a two-year plan to implement the goals set forth earlier by the committee.

Campaign Committee Chair Joey DeShields reported changes to the charter have been finalized and will be brought to vote in August. The changes make it easier for candidates to seek endorsement.

Office Manager Eva Manquera said she has volunteers for Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays but still has slots open. She is also coordinating the fair booth this year and will need volunteers who do shifts between August 11-15.

The Environmental Caucus is still planning a hike up Pipe Fork Creek, reported Vice Chair Rick Flora. They are still taking signups in case anyone wants to participate.

Dorothy said the **Healthcare Caucus** has had little attendance and may have to be suspended, meanwhile the **Gun Owners Caucus** is meeting Friday, at 4 pm at Climate City. Anyone interested is invited to attend.

The July meeting will feature speaker will be the chair of the Cannabis Advisory Panel (CAP). Dorothy said we may have to advertise this as there is much community interest in this now.

The meeting adjourned at 8:16 pm.

Submitted by Secretary Lynda Demsher