

Meeting Minutes for Joint Meeting of
Staunton, Augusta County and Waynesboro Democratic Committees
March 13, 2018
Staunton City Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER: The joint meeting was called to order by Beth Daisey, Staunton chair; Frank Nolen, Augusta County chair; and Robert Horowitz standing in for Sandie Hall, Waynesboro chair at 7:59 PM. An agenda was distributed.

Present: From Staunton – Beth Daisey, chair; Josh Howard, vice chair; Nancy Pyle, secretary; and Ken Venable, treasurer. **From Augusta County** – Frank Nolan, chair; Jenni Kitchen, vice chair; John Kowal, secretary; Phyllis Rosen, treasurer; Diane Kowal, vice chair for communications; and Sherry Stanley, VAN coordinator. **From Waynesboro** – Robert Horowitz, representing Sandie Hall, chair; and Jennifer Lewis, vice chair. Joint attendance estimated about 70 folks.

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER: State Senator for the 25th District Creigh Deeds was introduced by Frank Nolen. Senator Deeds proceeded to give an encouraging talk, providing information concerning the recent legislative session in Richmond as well as offering advice and council as we move forward as a much energized Democratic Party. He introduced himself as the last Democrat to be elected in the Shenandoah Valley. Speaking on a wide range of topics, Senator Deeds made many points:

- Concerning the upcoming election for the 6th District House Seat, it will be a tough fight but looking to what is happening around the country, not an impossible fight to win. (Referencing specifically the special election under way in Pennsylvania).
- Lessons learned from the recent Democratic wins is to talk to people where they are, not where you want them to be. Citing John Kennedy, “We get the politicians we deserve.” We must stay engaged and understand that all elections matter and every vote counts.
- Don’t get discouraged, in our Democracy, by design, change moves slowly and incrementally. Always be working towards the future.
- Turning to the recently ended legislative session:
 - In spite of Gerrymandering, after the 2017 elections, the house is almost tied
 - No one, neither Republicans nor Democrats knew exactly how to deal with the dramatic increase in parity in the House
 - Medicaid expansion for the first time was actually addressed in the House (although unfortunately not acted upon). As the Senate has already been discussing Medicaid expansion, this was an encouraging sign.
 - The session ended without a budget being passed so Governor Northam called for a Special Session to begin April 11, 2018.

The floor was then open to questions:

- Question about Gerrymandering. Answer: Senator Deeds responded that the only legislation put forth was just window dressing that he voted against. He favors a Constitutional Amendment establishing an independent commission.
- Question concerning pipelines. Answer: Senator Deeds pointed to a bill that passed that would give DEQ the ability to stop work in the event of water quality issues.
- Question on gun control. Answer: Senator Deeds pointed out that out of 73 bills introduced concerning gun control only one passed. In spite of recent events, he did not sense a lot of change in attitude from the other side of the aisle.
- Question again about Gerrymandering asking if a Constitutional Amendment is possible by the 2021 redistricting. Answer: I didn’t think so in that Constitutional amendments by design are a

slow process. However, the Governor has much influence over the process referring us to the success Governor Wilder had in the early 1990s.

- Question about legalizing marijuana. Answer: Beyond medical marijuana it would be tough as at the Federal level, it is still classified as a Schedule One narcotic. There are a couple of major obstacles including the current Attorney General, Jeff Sessions and the fact that the non-medical marijuana industry is barred from using the banking system in that they are involved in an illegal business enterprise per Federal Law.
- Question about the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). Answer: Yes it is a problem with too much influence exercised by lobbyists but unless all campaigns are public funded, big money will continue to have influence.
- Question: Is the NRA tax exempt and are they really funneling money into our schools. Answer: (from other members of the audience) Part of the NRA is tax exempt and they do provide money for gun clubs and ROTC activities.
- Question: Its 8 Months to election-what to do? And will you consider running for the House of Representatives seat from the 6th District. Answer: No, I do not intend to run. As for what to do, look at other recent races around the country for encouragement – the Pennsylvania race in progress for example – and ideas on how to run. We know there is the fine line between appealing to more progressive Democrats in the primary and a more conservative voting public in the general election.

SPECIAL LOCAL STUDENT REPORT: Cassidy Sadonis, Lee High School Senior was introduced by Beth Daisy to discuss events and activities being planned by local area students led by Cassidy and in response to the recent tragedy in Florida. A student walkout is planned for Wednesday, March 14, 2018 at 1:15 PM in memory of the lives lost in the Florida shooting and to high light the need for action to end another one of these tragedies from occurring. Cassidy expressed gratitude that this demonstration was encouraged by the school faculty and administration. Out of concern for student safety, the demonstration will be closed to the press and the public. Also being organized is a voter drive to be launched the beginning of April. In addition, Cassidy has organized and meets regularly with a group of 15 to 20 student leaders from not only Lee High but other area High Schools to eventually expand to a significant group of students available to volunteer in future elections. Cassidy pointed out that one of the points of these activities is to get students involved in politics (VOTING! In particular) and then hopefully talk with their parents about also getting involved. Cassidy, who was selected for the US Senate Youth Program, (a very prestigious selection as one of only 104 nationwide student delegates) related that during his week in Washington he met the President, Senators Warner and Kaine, civil rights icon John Lewis and “got a hug” from Bernie Sanders. In response to an audience question as to whether registering to vote is discussed in Civics class, the answer was an encouraging “yes”.

CANDIDATE INTRODUCTION: Jennifer Lewis, Democratic candidate for the US House 6th Congressional District, was introduced by Robert Horowitz. Jennifer gave a brief campaign overview beginning by stating that she has spent the last ten years serving the community and if elected will fight for our shared values. On the matter of Women’s Issues she supports equal pay for equal work, fully funded health care centers, protection for victims of domestic violence, and 12 week family and medical leave. On the matter of gun violence she supports strengthened background checks, removing semi-automatic weapons and high capacity magazines and has signed a pledge to accept no money from the NRA. Jennifer further stated she is a mental health advocate and supports a single payer health care system. She has pledged to take no corporate money particularly from Dominion or Appalachian Power or any other members of the fossil fuel industry. In lieu of the corporate money, Jennifer stated that she will need strong grass roots support in be successful.

REPORTS

Laura Kleiner – Young Democrats of Staunton, Augusta County & Waynesboro. Laura gave a brief description of the young democrats as ages of 13 through 40. The Young Democrats Annual Conference is being held close by at UVA in Charlottesville – April 6-8, 2018 – with guest speaker Senator Tim Kaine.

Diane Kowal and Jenni Kitchen announced two upcoming events. A non-partisan event entitled “Patriotism, Liberty and the 2nd Amendment” to be held April 28, 2018, 3:00 – 5:00 PM, tentatively at Booker T. And a 6th Congressional District Democratic Candidate debate to be held June 2, 2018 at 3:00 PM, location TBD.

Julie Schofield – 6th Congressional District Committee. Julie explained that the 6th District Committee is part of the Democratic Party of Virginia organization structure. Each congressional district in Virginia has a District Committee made up of 20 members. Our local SAW community has three members on the 6th District Committee: Julie Schofield, Jen Little, and Robert Horowitz. The 6th District Committee meets monthly with a state wide meeting held quarterly. One of the main functions of the district committees is to decide if candidate selection will be determined by a primary election or convention. The 6th District Committee decided that the Democratic candidate for the 6th District House seat will be determined by primary election. The committee is currently planning a high end fund raiser to be held in Roanoke after the June primary. Also a series of unity events are being planned after the primary to come together behind the Democratic candidate for the House.

Robert Horowitz – Waynesboro Democratic Committee. Robert announced that the Waynesboro Democratic Committee has secured a permanent headquarters that is available for use by the other committees. It is located at 901K Broad Street in the Willow Oaks Plaza in Waynesboro. An event has been scheduled for Monday, March 19, 2018 at 6:00 PM titled: “Get Out the Vote (GOTV) Training and Strategy Session”. Current plans for this space also include starting informational meetings every 3rd Monday of each month – specific scheduling and details TBD.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

John Kowal, ACDC secretary