

Meeting Minutes for Joint Meeting of
Staunton, Augusta County and Waynesboro Democratic Committees
July 10, 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 7:06 PM. An agenda was distributed.

Present: From Staunton – Beth Daisey, chair; Nancy Pyle, secretary; Ken Venable, treasurer. **From Augusta County** – Frank Nolan, chair; Linda Revis, vice chair; Phyllis Rosen, treasurer; John Kowal, secretary; Diane Kowal, vice chair for communications; Sherry Stanley, VAN coordinator. **From Waynesboro** – Robert Horowitz, representing Sandie Hall, chair. Also present was Jennifer Lewis, Democratic candidate for the 6th Congressional District and Annette Hyde, Democratic candidate for the 24th Virginia State Senate District. Joint meeting attendance estimated about 40 folks.

Welcoming Remarks: The three major events in which the joint committees participated recently were reviewed:

- Juneteenth: We had two booths at the Juneteenth celebration on June 30th at Montgomery Hall Park – one booth for voter registration and the second represented the joint democratic committees, Staunton, Augusta, and Waynesboro, and featured displays of literature and signs for Jennifer Lewis and Tim Kaine as well as new member application and volunteer forms. We introduced our cornhole attraction – “score and win a US Constitution” – which attracted attention to our booths. Special thanks to Sarah Paiste for donating the cornhole equipment to our committees. Many thanks to all booth volunteers.
- 4th of July Happy Birthday America: There were actually two separate events associated with this celebration at Gypsy Hill Park:
 - The Parade – We sponsored our traditional float in the parade with participation by all three committees. Thanks to the float decorators and to all those that rode the float or walked in the parade as proud Democrats – on an excruciatingly hot day. The crowd seemed a little subdued, probably due to the heat. We were honored to have Jennifer Lewis walk with us the entire parade route.
 - Booths – Following the parade, we had two booths set up during the all day celebration in the park. Again, as with Juneteenth, we had one booth for voter registration and the second represented the joint democratic committees, Staunton, Augusta, and Waynesboro, and featured displays of literature and signs for Jennifer Lewis and Tim Kaine as well as new member application and volunteer forms. And again, the cornhole contest was an attraction. Many thanks to all booth volunteers including members of the SAW Young Democrats.
- Staunton/Augusta HQ Grand Opening: Although available unmanned but for member use all year, in recognition of the HQ located at 2507 N. Augusta being manned seven days a week from now until the November election, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held on July 6th. Thanks to Marney Gibbs for organizing volunteers to man the HQ – it was noted that more volunteers are needed to fully staff this facility. Additional thanks to all those that turned out for the ribbon cutting including special guest Jennifer Lewis.

Audience Recognition: Members of the three committees stood and were recognized with one new member from Staunton, three new members from Augusta County and a return member for Waynesboro.

1st Guest Speaker – Jennifer Lewis, Democratic 6th Congressional District Candidate: Robert Horowitz introduced Jennifer as an award winning community organizer, an animal lover, an environmental preservationist, a good listener and more. Robert further stated that they have protested together and canvassed together and is so proud that she has taken this big step to run for US Representative from the 6th Congressional District as a friend to all.

Jennifer introduced herself as a resident of Waynesboro that has been active in the community for 11 years. Admitting that running for public office is tiring and at times exhausting, it is these events of coming out and meeting with us that keeps her motivated. Referring to her priorities, Jennifer stated that:

- Meeting with people up and down the 6th District, the #1 issue is healthcare. She supports the Ellison “Medicare for All” bill with a priority of bringing quality healthcare to rural areas.
- She supports increasing the minimum wage to \$15/hour noting that \$11/hour is required to satisfy only a person’s most basic of needs.
- She supports free community college or vocational training for all. Emphasizing vocational training Jennifer cited an example of a “for hire” sign for an automotive mechanic that has been displayed for over a year in Waynesboro. Finding qualified people in the trades is rapidly becoming a major problem.
- She supports using public funding only for public schools not private charter schools.
- She opposes both pipelines currently planned to run through our state. It is such a beautiful place to live, why would we want to destroy it? Locally we are not getting the jobs or the gas. And then there is the improper use of eminent domain. Jennifer affirmed that she has spent much of the last 4 years trying to stop these pipelines.
- She supports campaign finance reform and that the “Citizen’s United” Supreme Court ruling must be overturned. Jennifer pledged that she will take no money from the NRA, Dominion, or any Corporate PAC.

The floor was then open to Q&A:

- **Question:** How will you deal with the high price of prescription drugs? **Answer:** The Government must be able to negotiate drug prices as one very large customer.
- **Question:** What is your day like? **Answer:** I am not a wealthy person running for office so I’m still working part time. After work I am usually making fund raising phone calls or running off to events such as this. Jennifer then relayed a story of meeting a gentlemen while canvassing that needed a heart transplant but could not afford it. Sobbing on his doorstep, the gentlemen’s concern was losing his kids because at some point he would no longer be able to care for them. Jennifer then stated that this is why I am running – for this man – because Ben Cline truly does not care about people like this.
- **Question:** What is the federal role in fixing I-81? **Answer:** I do not agree with adding addition lanes the entire length. We do need to add more truck climbing lanes and longer merge lanes to reduce disruption to the traffic flow as trucks enter the highway. But we must always support the truckers and trucking industry, and tourist use of I-81.
- **Question:** 123 Democrats in congress are cosponsoring the Ellison “Medicare for All” bill. We need more Dems in congress so send Jennifer money every month. **Answer:** The campaign is being very cautious with the money we receive.
- **Question:** Is the DNC going to help? **Answer:** Probably not – the DNC doesn’t think the 6th can be won. My plan for winning is an intense ground game.

- **Question:** Can we contribute through ActBlue? **Answer:** Yes – go to jenniferlewisforcongress.com website and push the donate button.
- **Question:** ActBlue can be set up for monthly payments so it's painless to give. What other fund raisers are in the works. **Answer:** Meet and greet get-togethers and other events being set up now. The number one thing is to get the word out.
- **Question:** How do you pay for universal healthcare, free education, etc.? **Answer:** We already are. For example, when I was younger I had a \$20K lifesaving operation I could not afford. Due to my financial position at the time, \$16K was written off as "charity" – who do you think paid for that? We have the money but are choosing other priorities. For example, F-35s that we will never use.
- **Question:** What about the living wage burden on small business? **Answer:** Minimum wage would only apply to businesses employing 50 or more people. The point though is that it's not fair to work hard 40 hours a week and still need food stamps/welfare to survive.
- **Question:** Compare yourself with Ben Cline on "the wall" and other issues. **Answer:** We are two opposites. Cline wants to campaign with Corey Stewart and he supports "the wall". The biggest part of my campaign will be talking to people to convince them that Democrats really have their best interests in mind. Reality though is that when elected, Democrats fight hard for people that will never vote for them.
- **Question:** Will you be debating Ben Cline. **Answer:** I hope so.
- **Question:** Who have you been endorsed by? **Answer:** Our Revolution, Food and Water Watch, and Moms Demand Action, among others.

Jennifer closed by saying that more bumper stickers are coming and more yard signs will be available Friday. And stating that we will "do this" in November making me the first woman to represent the 6th!

Ellen Werther took a brief moment to say the "But the Name Hurts" signs are available at no charge but donations are appreciated.

2nd Guest Speaker – Liz Howley, Moms Demand Action, Organizer: Ellen Werther introduced Liz by explaining that she wanted to bring Liz here and get involved in Moms Demand Action because of a personal experience with gun violence. When Ellen was teaching, she was involved in an active shooter situation. This was at an elementary school involving kids with medical issues and was a 3-4 hour event.

Liz introduced herself as the head of the Harrisonburg Chapter of Moms Demand Action (MDA). Liz explained she has lived in Harrisonburg for 16 years and has 3 children. While working in the college health field, she became interested in studying gun violence as a public health issue. She decided to start the Harrisonburg chapter of MDA after Parkland.

Liz noted that the MDA organization just recognized their 5 year anniversary as they were started following Sandy Hook. Patterned after MADD, MDA is a single issue, non-partisan (includes Republicans) group dedicated to passage of common sense legislation concerning gun violence. She emphasized that the safety of our children should not be a partisan issue.

Further, Liz stated that the Harrisonburg chapter is new having had only three official meetings. Current plans are to actively participate in rallies and marches, conduct education programs about gun safety, and behind the scenes work on increasing interest and membership in the group.

She indicated that to start a local group in Staunton, help will be available from an MDA representative from the Virginia office. With one or two leaders, monthly meetings can begin. There is lots of training on-line to educate members on how to counter NRA propaganda. The mission is not anti-2nd amendment but rather lobbying for common sense gun laws.

The floor was then opened to Q&A:

- **Question:** How many members in the Harrisonburg chapter? **Answer:** About 35.
- **Question:** Are there dues? **Answer:** No – it is free to join.
- **Question:** Do you sponsor live fire demos with the AR15 to show the destructive power?
Answer: No.
- **Question:** Should you demonstrate the fire power of some of these weapons. **Answer:** Not part of our focus but if we do, it would be in cooperation with local police departments. Our focus is on safety including unintended deaths of children due to unsecured weapons and legislation.
- **Question:** Do you work with schools? **Answer:** Yes, with both Harrisonburg City and Rockingham County schools and have a number of teachers in our membership. We also work with pediatricians offices.
- **Question:** What specific bills are being lobbied for? **Answer:** Banning bump stocks and red flag laws in Virginia.

This portion of the meeting ended with Ellen passing around a sign-up sheet for those interested in starting a Staunton chapter of MDA.

Committee Reports:

- 1) **6th Congressional District:** Robert Horowitz, Delegate to the Democratic 6th District Committee from Waynesboro reported that the ethical issue involving the committee has been resolved. When he joined the committee, Robert found a committee not well organized. It takes a lot to create and maintain an effective organization and it didn't seem other committee members were interested in doing this. Robert said he was going to resign but has decided to stay to help elect Jennifer Lewis and Tim Kaine. He emphatically stated that this committee needs "the fundamentals".
- 2) **Young Democrats:** Abigail Brand, Local SAW Young Democrats chair, introduced herself as having recently taken over from Laura Kleiner. She stated she was a rising senior at Riverheads High School. As far as recent developments, Abigail said that Bruce Elder had been honored as a Young Democrat for life. She also mentioned local candidates and city elected past and present officials who are Young Democrats: Jennifer Lewis, Natasha McCurdy, and Laura Kleiner. Abigail indicated that her immediate agenda was to begin an outreach program to teenagers (her age group) and forming a social media group. There were a few questions from the audience:
 - **Question:** Do you have contacts at other high schools. **Answer:** At the moment, we have one group member from R.E. Lee High School.
 - **Question:** What ages are in the Young Democrats? **Answer:** I am the youngest at 17 but age eligibility goes up to 40.
 - **Question:** Are you planning voter registration in the high schools? **Answer:** To this point Diane Kowal reported that before summer break, voter registration was conducted at Stuarts Draft and Wilson Memorial High Schools. Abigail and Diane agreed to work as a team on voter registration in the high schools when school resumes. Diane indicated that any personal contacts at each school would be a help.

Frank Nolen then took the opportunity to thank Abigail for helping to decorate our 4th of July parade float and also staffing a few shifts at the 4th of July booths with Young Democrats.

3) VA Democratic Coordinated Campaign: Samantha Litchford, Local CC Field Coordinator, began by describing her area of responsibility as about 91% of the 6th District. Based out of Harrisonburg, Samantha indicated that the Harrisonburg office was just recently opened with Tim Kaine and Jennifer Lewis in attendance. She stated that she has met with local committee leadership many times in the last month and current initiatives include training on virtual phone banking and the mini-VAN and starting the ground game. Samantha promised that while phone banking or canvassing, individuals will be calling or knocking on doors in the City or County where you live (unless volunteering to do otherwise). Might be fun to see who “the Democrat” in your neighborhood is and maybe even get some secret Democrats to open up and display a yard sign. There was one question from the floor:

- **Question:** Why go to the Coordinated Campaign and not work directly for the Jennifer Lewis campaign? **Answer:** Different targeting but still supporting both Jennifer and Tim Kaine. Either way you are making a difference.

Samantha ended with confidence that the local Democratic committees and the Coordinated Campaign will work together well.

Subcommittee Updates:

- 1) SAW Democratic Website:** Diane Kowal indicated that the combined SAW website should go live in a week or two and praised Amanda Siler for doing such a fabulous job. She reiterated that although it is a combined SAW website, a visitor can pick individual committees to visit.
- 2) Augusta County Fair:** Frank Nolen stated that having a presence at the fair is a good way to promote Democrats and hopefully by the time of the fair (July 31 – Aug 4) we will have plenty of signs, brochures, and other paraphernalia for both Jennifer Lewis and Tim Kaine. He indicated that Diane Kowal had a sign-up sheet for volunteering to man our booth. Diane said that volunteer response has been good but there were still 9 open slots to be filled. Frank then suggested that we solicit prizes (gift cards for example) from local businesses to raffle off as a way to attract more visits to our booth. This suggestion to be taken under consideration. Frank closed by reassuring volunteers that the booth is indoors and air conditioned.
- 3) Canvassing Training:** Robert Horowitz introduced canvassing as the grunt work that wins or loses campaigns and the winner is the one that canvasses and phone banks the most. Reiterating what was stated earlier by Samantha Litchford, working with the coordinated campaign, volunteers will be asked to only canvass or phone bank within the city or county they live. Robert as earlier, invoked the concept of “fundamentals”. To be effective, volunteers will be asked to learn what Jennifer Lewis is about versus Ben Cline and be able to talk specifics. As Democrats we must proudly look people in the eye because we are in the right. Robert closed by announcing that the first of three training sessions will be held July 16, 2018 at 6:00 PM in the Waynesboro HQ.

Special Report: “Getting the Word Out” Campaign – Suggestions from the Women’s Summit: Linda Revis attended the Women’s Conference in Northern Virginia recently and briefed us on important take-aways for more effectively “getting the word out”.

- Make events fun and multi-purpose
 - Get kids involved – kids are a good hook to attract interest
 - Pizza Parties

- Social Media presence is a must
- The personal touch is always more effective
 - Make personal contacts
 - Personal postcards have been shown to be as effective as canvassing or phone banking
- Look into the “Adopt- A-Candidate” program.
- Look into the 31st Street Program.

A skit was then presented (with the help of Julia Davis) demonstrating how to talk with someone that has different opinions and views than you. Most important is to 1) find a common progressive theme that is sure to be there somewhere to begin the conversation and 2) don't give a reason for the other person to become defensive.

Open Discussion & Suggestions: There was one question from the floor:

- **Question:** Can we switch the order of the joint versus the individual committee business meetings? **Answer:** This was unusual this evening to be running so late.

Frank Nolen closed the meeting by recognizing our special guest, Annette Hyde, Democratic candidate for the 24th Virginia State Senate District.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM at which time the Staunton and Augusta County Democratic Committees retired to their respective business meetings.

Respectfully submitted,

John Kowal, ACDC secretary