

Meeting Minutes for Joint Meeting of
Staunton, Augusta County and Waynesboro Democratic Committees
April 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 7:02 PM. An agenda was distributed.

Present: From Staunton – Beth Daisey, chair; Josh Howard, vice chair; and Nancy Pyle, secretary. **From Augusta County** – Frank Nolen, chair; Jenni Kitchen, vice chair; John Kowal, secretary; Phyllis Rosen, treasurer; and Diane Kowal, vice chair for communications. **From Waynesboro** – Robert Horowitz, representing Sandie Hall, chair; and Jennifer Lewis, vice chair. Also in attendance were two of the four Democratic candidates for the US House in the Virginia 6th Congressional District: Jennifer Lewis and Charlotte Moore and the Democratic candidate for the 24th Virginia State Senate District: Annette Hyde. Joint meeting attendance estimated about 50 folks.

6th CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT CANDIDATES FORUM: Candidates were announced (alphabetically) to begin their allotted forum time.

Jennifer Lewis – Waynesboro – introduced herself as having spent the last ten years in service to the community serving on various Boards and Commissions and being active in the Democratic Party; serving the last 3 ½ years as Vice Chair of the Waynesboro Democratic Committee. In 2013 she was awarded Democrat of the Year and in 2014 awarded Grassroots Organizer of the Year for the 6th District. Candidate Lewis then presented her core beliefs and values on various topics stating that she will be the voice of the small family farm as a small family farm was where she grew up.

- She supports the Paycheck Fairness Act, fully funded women’s healthcare facilities, and strengthening laws concerning domestic violence and abuse.
- On the topic of gun violence, Candidate Lewis supports a ban on bump stocks, strengthening background checks, closing the gun sales loophole related to gun shows and the internet, and fully supports the Feinstein Assault Weapons Ban Bill.
- Regarding healthcare, Candidate Lewis supports improved and expanded Medicare for all. She stated she is familiar with Medicare/Medicaid as she works in the mental health field and also related a terrible experience when she personally had to have surgery at a time when she had no health insurance.

The floor was then open to questions:

- Question about her position on gun ownership and how it will “play” with 6th District voters. Answer: Candidate Lewis responded that she doesn’t believe her four proposals are too progressive for most voters and that she is not taking away anyone’s guns.
- Question concerning the teacher shortage. Answer: Candidate Lewis reflected on her time working in the Public School System as a CSB (Community Service Board) contract employee working with kids having problems giving her experience in the public school system. Further she stated that attracting more qualified teachers not only requires better pay but also school funding as teachers should not be out buying supplies for the classroom. Also she recognizes that the trend towards increased class sizes are starting to overwhelm teachers.
- Not a question but a comment from the audience that Jennifer will be a Community Oriented Representative.

- Concern expressed again about how Candidate Lewis needs to approach sensitive issues to appeal to voters in the 6th District. Answer: Candidate Lewis expressed her belief that by meeting with people and building personal relationships she can convince voters of all persuasions to vote for her. She further stated that she has already built these personal relationships as a member of the Soil & Water Conservation Board and as a founding member of the Friends of Augusta County. As a supporter of strong private property rights and the Ellison Medicare for All Bill she is confident she can persuade voters that voting for a Democrat is in their best interest.
- Other comments from the audience about topics that would appeal to a broad range of voters:
 - Fully fund Special Education
 - Fix Medicare Part D that prohibits the Government from negotiating drug prices
 - Whether Democrat or Republican, the first priority of all Mom's is they want their kids protected.

Charlotte Moore – Roanoke – introduced herself as having lived in Southwest Virginia her entire life. She further stated that she has two children, a daughter working in the mental health field and a son that served in the US Navy. She has served on the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors, the Virginia Association of Counties Board of Directors, and other Boards and Commissions. One of her primary concerns is protecting the environment. Her approach to entering Congress will be to have compassionate conversations with fellow members. Being respectful and showing integrity in these conversations with no bullying. Candidate Moore then presented her core beliefs and values on various topics:

- Education – supports better pay for teachers and more teachers. Also stressed that education needs are in both the academic and vocational fields.
- Health Care: ADA benefits need to be put back into effect. There needs to be more access to mental health care. Prescription drug costs now do not make sense and surgery costs in the US far exceed what costs are overseas. The question is, “Why are Insurance Companies and Drug Companies in control of our health care?”

The floor was then open to questions:

- Question asking for a rundown of other core beliefs. Answer: Candidate Moore's response:
 - I believe the Government has no business dictating to people about their personal healthcare decisions.
 - I believe in the 2nd Amendment and am a gun owner myself but AR15s and bump stocks are not needed and should be restricted in the name of protecting our children and families.
 - I support gay rights. Everyone has the right do what they want and the Government should not intervene in our choices.
- Question about candidates never talking about voting rights. Answer: Candidate Moore stated that she supports automatic voter registration as people turn 18.
- Question about neither candidate talking about jobs. Answer: Candidate Moore talked about her personal experience running a landscaping business and stated that the minimum wage needs to be increased.
- Question about I-81. Answer: Candidate Moore responded that she had been a member of a Regional Commission that addressed the I-81 issue. A possible solution would be an additional “truck” lane to ease some of the traffic congestion.

- Question about Congress having to deal with worldwide issues – Syria for example. Answer: Candidate Moore expressed her belief that we need to work with our allies to find solutions to problems.

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Joint Committee Special Events Reminders

- Patriotism, Liberty and the 2nd Amendment, a non-partisan event concerning gun control and gun reform will be held April 28, 2018, 3PM at the Booker T. Washington Center.
- A voter registration event in Staunton will be held April 20, 2018 in conjunction with the planned student walkout and using local students to help register their classmates. It was noted that in the County, registration has begun at the county high schools starting with Stuarts Draft that occurred on April 9th and Wilson scheduled for April 16th.
- For the May 8th regular joint meeting, speakers are tentatively being lined up with a focus on election cycle coordination with the Democratic Party of Virginia.
- The June 12th regularly scheduled joint meeting will be on Primary election night so we are planning to organize an election night party.
 - Question from the floor: Are the Democratic Committees backing a particular candidate at this time? Answer: Per Democratic Party of Virginia policy, Democratic Committees are to remain neutral until after the Primary Election. After the June Primary, the Democratic Committees can begin campaign functions such as phone banking, canvassing, opening and manning the headquarters office, etc. in support of the Democratic candidate selected in the Primary.

Another question from the floor concerned working the polls and driving voters to the polls for the upcoming city elections in Staunton and Waynesboro. Answer: This is the responsibility of the individual candidates and their supporters.

Young Democrats: Laura Kleiner, Chair of the Young Democrats of Staunton, Augusta County was introduced to provide a summary of the Young Democrats Annual Conference which was held at UVA in Charlottesville, April 6-8, 2018. Laura reported it was a worthwhile and well attended event with Tim Kaine as guest speaker. It was noted that Travis Chaplin was elected Vice Chair of the Disability Caucus. It was reiterated that membership in the Young Democrats is open to all aged 40 and under.

Acknowledgement for the Joint March Meeting Minutes: It was reported that minutes of the Joint Meetings will now be available and distributed among the committee memberships. Beth very graciously thanked John Kowal for volunteering for the minutes recording assignment.

Joint Democratic Committee Website: Diane Kowal was introduced to provide an update on the Staunton, Augusta County, Waynesboro Democratic Committees Joint Website:

- The goal is to provide “one stop shopping” for the “visitor” while eliminating duplication, creating a professional appearance and sharing costs to create a better website for less, across all three committees.
- The decision has been made to use the WiX platform for its ease of use, provides more modern flexible features and provides highly flexible security controls.
- There will be one platform for all three committees with tabs that will take the “visitor” to the individual committees.

- The Home Page will include information common to all three committees but the individual committees will have sole control over the content of their individual pages.
- There will also be a tab on the Home Page that will take the “visitor” to Generic/Specific pages that will include detail information and links on such topics as who is my Government representative at the local, state and federal levels?, how to Contact my Representative?, How to Register to Vote?, How to find one’s polling location?, what other community organizations and resources are available?, etc.
- The domain name will be “SAW Democrats”.
- It has been agreed among the three committee chairs to purchase a one year subscription at a cost of \$56 per year, per committee for evaluation. If things are working out, we can buy multi-year subscriptions in the future at a discount.

Question from the floor: Will the membership be able to vote on the website as presented? Answer: Each committee will need to vote on spending the money for the subscription but the leadership of all three committees have agreed to proceed with the design as described.

Open Discussion:

- Question was asked about why only two of the four Democratic candidates for the 6th District were present. Answer: The other two candidates had been given their 15 minutes to introduce themselves at a previous meeting and having Jennifer Lewis and Charlotte Moore at this meeting was to give them equal time. It was also noted that there is a debate between all four candidates planned for June 2, 2018 at 3:00 PM.
- Follow up question asking about a possible fifth candidate – Ian Larson. Answer: Started too late and could not get the required signatures in time to qualify.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM at which time the Staunton and Augusta County Democratic Committees retired to their respective business meetings.

Respectfully submitted,

John Kowal, ACDC secretary