

Plymouth Area Democrats
Minutes of the Meeting, February 20, 2013

After our usual potluck dinner, Acting Chair Paul Phillips welcomed members to the February meeting at 6:40pm. About 40 members were in attendance, including a few PSU students.

Paul congratulated the "Keep the Heat On" committee on their success this year in raising \$32,000 for fuel assistance to be distributed by the Plymouth Area Community Closet. He also recognized the success of the NH Democrats in winning seats at the local, state, and national level. Paul expressed his personal view that the public has, after two years, realized that the Tea Party has not governed in the NH tradition; that they have been divisive and despicable and have ignored the most needy citizens of our state. He emphasized that we cannot ever again let our guard down. Too many people are counting on us to do the right thing.

The Chair recognized our state reps, for whom Wednesday is always a very long day. In attendance were Sue Ford, Mary Cooney, Suzanne Smith, Carol Friedrich, and Jim Aguir. Also recognized were Martha Richards, Val Scarborough, Deb Reynolds, Phil Preston, and Henry Melany – a visiting Democrat from New Boston.

Barbara Therriault, our treasurer, reported that we have \$3,708.80 in the account.

Val Scarborough, our Selectperson, reported that two positions are open for Select Board and that five people are running, including our own Bill Bolton. (Also, Peter Martin, Ray Gossier, Neil McIver, and Omar Ahern). Bill Bolton then introduced himself and asked for the support of the Plymouth Area Democrats.

Deb Reynolds took the microphone to thank Paul for being a terrific interim chair and recognized Bob Lamb as a superb candidate for NH Senate. She also praised Governor Hassan's recent budget address and her support in defeating the so-called "right to work" bill. Reynolds emphasized that Governor Hassan wants to hear from us and that we should share our thoughts.

Phillips then mentioned that elections for the PAD board would be coming up in March. He announced that several administrative slots were now filled: Val Scarborough will be handling our communications with the media and Bill Bolton will be our technical officer and will be taking over the web site from Joyce Weston. The town caucuses will also be held during the next meeting.

Martha Richards, our County Commissioner, announced additional money for "Keep the Heat On" from the Dead River Oil Company and the NH Electric Cooperative. She also reported on the county news. First, the old jail will be demolished, after lots of different ideas for repurposing the 1800s building were

discussed. The building had become a “money pit”, and Richards feels the decision was appropriate. The new jail is doing well; the farm is productive, and Richards is confident that the taxpayers’ dollars are being well spent.

Legislative Updates from the State Representatives

Rep. Sue Ford is on the House Finance Committee, which has the arduous responsibility of reviewing Governor Hassan's proposed budget, which is easily 3 to 4 inches thick. Ford is pleased with the new system of integrating the parties in the house, where Democrats, Republicans, and Libertarians now sit side-by-side. Attitudes seem to be changing and there is a new feeling of “working together.” One recent success was to repeal the education voucher system (HB370), but there may be a court challenge on that issue. Ford responded to a question from Martha Richards about the Tea Party, explaining that Speaker O’Brien manipulated the Tea Party and annoyed Republicans as much as if not more than the Democrats with lots of unnecessary discussion and delays.

Rep. Mary Cooney, who is on Ways and Means, has been dealing with the casino issue and charitable giving. She explained the connection between betting on dogs and horses and the benefits of charities.

Rep. Jim Aguiar, who sits (with Suzanne Smith) on the Resources, Recreation, and Development committee, discussed his success in having a bill requested by the Town of Orford successfully passed in the House Judiciary Committee. He discussed the ATV park in Berlin, which currently is not self-sustaining, charging only \$3.50 to ride. They also have problems with accidents and even fatalities, since no helmets are required and larger vehicles are constantly being admitted to the facilities.

Rep. Suzanne Smith, of the Science, Environment, and Technology committee, has been working on a bill to require labeling of genetically modified food and on energy bills impacting on Northern Pass and wind towers. One aim is to require the burying of power lines. She supports a moratorium on all energy projects, partly because most of her committee is new and uninformed of the issues.

Reps. Carol Friedrich is on the House Child and Family Committee and is addressing legislation regarding providing legal representation of indigent parents in abuse and neglect cases. She is trying to get the 10% cut in CHINS funding reinstated. A committee to study other states responses to these problems has been established.

Rep. Mary Cooney is also in a House leadership position, working on the Ways and Means Committee, and reported on issues on that committee. Other comments from the PAD membership dealt with genetically modified food labeling, medical marijuana, and solar energy grants.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Joyce Weston, Secretary

