

Plymouth Area Democrats Meeting
April 14, 2015

Plymouth Area Senior Center

Call to Order/Business Meeting – Joyce Weston

Joyce introduced Martha Richards, Tink Taylor, Val Scarborough, Deb Reynolds, Bill Bolton, Mary Cooney, Suzanne Smith, Carol Friedrich, and Linda Lauer. Town Committee Chairs David Peeler for Campton, Marilyn Lieto for Groton, Fran Taylor for Holderness, Suzanne Smith for Hebron, and Paul Phillips for Plymouth.

Joyce said PAD is still looking for town committee chairs from Dorchester, Alexandria, Warren (though we may have one), Waterville Valley and Woodstock. *If you are interested or know someone who might be, please contact Joyce Weston.*

Minutes from March approved.

Treasurer's Report: Barbara Fahey said the PAD checking balance was \$2,538.

Joyce introduced Meredith Shevitz, Deputy Political Director, with the NH Democratic Party, formerly with the Governor's election campaign. Meredith is working on the grass roots movement for 2016 elections. Meredith stated NH did quite well compared to some purple states in 2014, but after some review of the voting patterns in the state, they can see that where local committee were active, the Democrats did much better. She plans to work with Town Committees so we can do even better in 2016. She said the Democrats have 170 town chairs and the Republicans have 75.

The NH State Delegation Selection Plan is available for comment until April 23 on the NHDP.org site. Liz Wester will be working with town chairs on vote Builder.

McIntyre-Shaheen 100 Club Dinner – Nancy Pelosi will be the featured speaker May 3; see NHDP.org.

Suzanne Smith and Mary Cooney gave an update from the House about the state budget process.

- Governor presents her budget in January, after working with Dept. Heads. It is a balanced budget.
- House then began making draconian cuts to the proposed budget. Many Republican legislators have taken a pledge to have no increase in taxes or fees. This will affect the University System of NH, Meals on Wheels, services to seniors, and services to the

disabled and children. There are several lawsuits, particularly where the state did not fulfill its responsibilities for mental health. They had a lot of information about the Koch brothers pledge to restrict raising revenue, Medicaid Expansion, tax on cigarettes, cutting auditors from the Dept. of Revenue, renewed talk of casinos, and more. Regarding education, they talked about how Hebron and Holderness are losing money with the current formula. Senator Jennie Forester is Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, and they are interested to see how she will handle these issues.

Martha Richards gave a brief report from the County Commission regarding the budget increases.

Deb Reynolds then presented Martha with flowers and a big thank you for all her work with the Grafton County Democrats and for being one of the original founders of the Plymouth Area Democrats. At the April meeting of the Grafton County Democrats Martha had handed the gavel as Chair to the very capable Susan Ford of Easton.

Bill Bolton introduced our speaker, Nick Toumpas, Commissioner of the NH Department of Health and Human Services. Commissioner Toumpas gave an excellent talk about the DHHS budget.

- NH Health Protection Program, aka Medicaid Expansion, was passed by the Legislature, but DHHS was given no budget to implement it.
- The State hospital was recently part of a US Dept. of Justice action, resulting from a lawsuit critical of the care and accusing the state of “warehousing” patients there. Many changes are planned to comply with the report, but (I believe) the Commissioner said this budget was about 6 million dollars short.
- Even before the Affordable Care Act was in place, about 11,000 people, mostly children, became eligible for expanded (much needed) health care. This would add an unfunded \$20,000 million to the budget.
- Specifically, though many people point out that the House was cutting the proposed budget and not the current year budget, in his case, the DHHS budget (from general funds) was to receive \$649 million dollars in the Governor’s proposed budget, in the current year the DHHS budget is \$613 million and the House is recommending it be \$604 million (in the first year of the new budget year). So there are often real cuts to current year budgets. And these are the simple numbers. The Commissioner then explained the more complicated parts, which involved carry forwards, authorized new expenditures but that require cuts in his budget at his discretion, and other shortfalls that are too complicate to note.

The Senate's theme for the year is they are interested in "needs but not wants". However, they are interested in re-authorizing the "Uncompensated Care," also known as Medicaid Expansion.

Commissioner Toumpas then answered a lively, interesting, and informed array of questions from the audience. Joyce and all of PAD thanked the Commissioner and he stayed to talk with a few people.

Joyce adjourned the meeting just after 8pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted,

Barbara B. Fahey

