

Plymouth Area Democrats

General Meeting Minutes

May 26, 2021

Ron Goggans, Vice-chair, convened via zoom at approx. 6:10 PM, after a brief time for participants to chat. He began by introducing the dignitaries on the call and in the Zoom Room.

Ron, acting Treasurer, presented the Treasurer's report. PAD currently has \$1380.98 as a balance in our account. There are \$622.98 in receipts to date and there is \$386.35 in expenditures to date.

Ron announced that Rita, Comms Chair, has tendered her resignation effective June 16th when our next newsletter goes out. He extended well wishes to her in her new grant-work with the Navajo Nation.

Ron announced our newly elected bylaws committee which includes: Representative Suzanne Smith, Representative Joyce Weston, Sherrill Howard, Bill Nesheim, and Ron Goggans. He announced that he will put the 1st meeting together to elect a chair for this committee.

Ron announced that the Grafton County caucus, which was held May 19th, has resulted in a new board. Ann Garland will chair, Josh Adjutant will be vice chair, Nancy Graham is treasurer, Sebastian Fuentes is secretary. The members-at-large who were elected are: Jordan Applewhite, Bill Bolton, Deb Nelson, Deb Reynolds, Martha Rich, Martha Richards. Congratulations to all who have been elected. Ann Garland was invited to attend this meeting but was indisposed and sent her regrets.

Ron entertained motion to commit the bylaws work to the newly formed committee. There was a first and 2nd and the motion was approved unanimously

Stephanie Osborne, nominating committee member, was introduced. She put forth Kim Rawson's name as a nominee for Comms Director. There was a request for names from the floor, and seeing none Kim was elected unanimously. Kim gave a brief introduction of herself and her work.

Jennifer, Secretary, announced our 1st in-person general meeting will be our June meeting, held on June 23rd. The board's intention is for it to be a potluck and she requested assistance in planning. Anyone with interest, please email her. She placed her email address in the comments section.

Representative Denny Ruprecht introduced himself as the newly appointed deputy political director for the NHDP. Anyone wishing to speak with him can contact him at the address he provided in the comments section.

Rita, Comms Officer, introduced our featured speaker, Thea Sebastian. Ms. Sebastian is a civil rights attorney and activist who is currently the Policy Director for Civil Rights Corps, a non-profit organization that has been spearheading impact litigation and policy advocacy nationwide to end criminal-legal injustice and build a new, non-carceral paradigm for public safety. She has been passionate about re-imagining how to keep communities safe. The current paradigm of criminalizing is not working. The focus should be on root causes, and to address the issues before they become criminal. She helped lead the draft of comprehensive legislation after the George Floyd murder, the Breathe Act. And to set up a new agency, the Division of Community Safety, outside of criminalization, for things like investing in community mental health services and additional streetlights for safety.

Representative Cori Bush of Missouri will be introducing the bill to allow grants to be distributed to communities. Ms. Sebastian called for questions and comments. Representative Joyce Weston mentioned the mental health bill being battled out in Concord currently. Ms. Sebastian commented there is much evidence to the downstream savings of dollars spent in community support. Housing and substance abuse support is fiscally responsible. Money spent building jails or reinforcing police departments is not. Ms. Sebastian finds that local legislative members are more receptive to these arguments because they are more interested in their tight bottom line.

Sebastian Fuentes made a comment that systemic racism needs to be addressed when talking about criminal justice reform and police reform. She acknowledged that, yes, these issues need to be tackled, or the criminal system will never be reformed. Representative Weston spoke to the Representative Manny Espitia harassment issue. And that the county jail is under populated at the moment, not overpopulated. Ms. Sebastian spoke to the role of federal policy, and the Free Them All matching grant program, a grant would be issued when jails close, which could benefit our county jail.

Deb Reynolds asked that Ms. Sebastian speak about encouraging friends and neighbors to change their perspective on safety. Ms. Sebastian suggested the following exercise: “close your eyes and envision what does safety mean to you?” in order to shift the paradigm and person’s perspective. She also suggested a video on the Breathe Act website, and placed the link in the comments section. She will have petitions and sign-on letters to help get this bill passed. She spoke about the concept of “cimmigration”, and how Trump used legal criminal authority to take children from immigrants at the border. In closing, the Breathe Act uses the coined term “non-carceral safety” which is not a term that is good branding, she feels. And she requests that anyone who has any brainstorming ideas for a different term to please contact her. She also stated that we will never solve the issues if we don't think systemically. This is not about individuals; it is about broken systems. And solutions need to be as big as the problem.

Representative Josh Adjutant was introduced and spoke a few words on his new position as Grafton County Co-Chair. He remarked that we need to deliver at least 20 seats majority in Concord in this next election. He looks forward to working hard to get dems elected in 2022.

Kim Rawson gave a few legislative updates. The school vouchers bill was tucked into the budget today. HB 544 is moving forward, and she urges us with Republican representatives, especially, to encourage them to vote “no” on these items. She also mentioned her informative discussion with Nate Tim, of Rural Democratic Caucus of Wisconsin and his ideas that work in rural areas, such as ours.

Meeting adjourned.