

Minutes – April 12, 2023 Shiawassee Dems Party Monthly Meeting

Welcome and Call to Order at 7:15 p.m.: Chair Stephen Schlaack

All - Pledge of Allegiance, Moment of silence

Roll Call of Officers: All present: secretary – Bailey Leppert

Native American Acknowledgment Statement – read by Kristin Babel

In-Person Meeting Attendees: (19) Aaron Ray, Stephen Schlaack, Kristin Babel, Bailey Leppert, Laurie Cook, Emily Havelka, Patrick Podvay, Tamara Sanders, Janet Horvath, Chris Clissold, Ann Arwin, Patty VanLuven, Laurel Robb, Danny Miller, Janice Ray, Paul Ray, Cheryl Farver, Lloyd Swan, Susan Swan

Virtual Meeting Attendees: (9) Bus Spaniola, Carol Spaniola, Paul Cook, Joanne Carlson, Linda Anderson, Janet Kiley, Don, Kirk Rheume, Jeanne Munn

After the roll call of officers, Stephen Schlaack informed the group that Becky Perry has resigned as recording secretary due to her busy schedule and that Bailey Leppert will take on Becky's recording duties moving forward.

Laurel Robb moved to approve the agenda for tonight's meeting. Chris Clissold seconded the motion. All ayes.

Emily Havelka moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting and Danny Miller seconded her motion. All ayes.

Treasurer's Report:

Aaron presented the treasurer's report. As of April 10, the balance of the administrative account was \$950.45. There has been a flood of donations for Pasta & Politics going into the general account. Expenses were \$1,406.62. The general account had a balance of \$3,995.11 with \$5 in savings for a total of \$4,950.56. Aaron reported that the party had sold an additional seven tickets for Pasta & Politics since the report was assembled on Monday. Bus Spaniola moved to approve the treasurer's report. Emily Havelka seconded. All ayes.

Aaron continued to report about Pasta & Politics. We have three guest speakers who are Elissa Slotkin, Sam Singh, and Penelope Tsernoglou and a video message from Debbie Stabenow. Aaron will report on profits from Pasta & Politics at the next meeting, Last year we made \$4,816.44. Currently we're sitting at \$3,900 in profit. We have sold 84 tickets. Aaron explained how to buy tickets online for any that have not gotten their ticket yet. Stephen also stated that we are accepting donations for silent auction items and all items help us make more profit that goes to help party actions. Cheryl Farver asked if people donating should provide a typed description that can go with their item so guests know what it is. Aaron said that would be helpful and gave Paul Ray's description as an example (6-7 lines, description, value estimate).

Chair's Report:

Stephen had the monthly MDP chair's call. On the call, they covered training for supporting and running campaigns. He explained that there are many resources available in Lansing or online. Reach out to Stephen if you are interested in these training resources. He also said they announced MERTS is going away. Aaron explained that this is an online system that parties are required to use to file financial reports and the current admin is phasing this system out and replacing it with a new system that is still under construction. This will change how all the party treasurers in Michigan do their work to stay compliant with state and federal law.

Stephen has been invited to a dinner honoring Stabenow on May 20. Also the 2024 Dem Convention will be in Chicago. MDP will be sharing more resources with us on cyber security and protecting personally identifiable information.

Committee Reports

- a. Membership and Candidate Development: Ann Arwin presented that we currently have 45 members through MDP, 4 of which are new members. Our committee is meeting regularly to develop a plan to do something new to attract new members. The plan is to address each county commission district separately, starting with District 6. We plan to invite all known District 6 Democrats to gather by the end of May. The goal is to identify a potential candidate that represents their values. Step 2 will be to gather concerns and information from the people of the district. Step 3, each attendee will be asked to bring a guest that shares their passions or concerns to the next gathering to be held by the end of June. These new attendees can be of any or no political party. These attendees will be asked to identify potential candidates, community spaces, assets, and needs. Step 5, actions and leadership from this point should come from attendees so this is a ground up rather than top-down operation. Committee members will be there to support organization, handle communications, and make the events enjoyable and that attendees feel their contribution has been valuable. Ann opened up for questions and comments. Laurel Robb said she thought this seems very well organized and encouraged us to add on encouraging people to join boards, like Parks & Rec. Janet Kiley stated that as a member of the Membership Committee, she is excited about this direction and starting with District 6. Stephen stated that he is pleased to hear this approach can be replicated across the county because as an org with limited resources, reproducibility is very important and helpful. Patty VanLuven stated that this is a community building experience that encourages people to tell everyone what they need, assets they have. If you know people that are lonely or isolated, we want to bring them in so they know they have a community and they can feel heard. Ann explained that we send notices when memberships are expiring and we send cards at various personal occasions. She requested graphic design help. Ann has designed a cover image that could be used by these district groups to communicate by mail or in hard copy, in addition to virtual communications.

- b. **Communications & Technology:** Stephen mentioned that there have been website updates that are supporting Pasta & Politics and cleaning up a few things. Stephen would like to hear from members if there is information that we can host on the Dems website that would make actions we're doing in the community easier. He and Emily will be gathering these ideas. Emily explained that there is a process to authenticate a group with Facebook to run sponsored ads and we ran into problems with this trying to buy ads for Pasta & Politics. She has been working through these steps (providing ID, etc.) but it is still ongoing and we're waiting on Facebook. Stephen says we should be approved in 48 hours. Emily states that sharing the posts on Facebook is doing the work of the paid ads for free. Stephen said our follower numbers have increased and asked people to share posts and also said that Friends of the Shia Dems is another group that shares helpful information. Stephen also said that he is working on cleaning up the Master List of contacts (people who are deceased or have moved). Six people are volunteering to help with this work. Aaron explained that last year we received 36 return to sender Pasta & Politics invites and this year we've only received 13. Stephen explained that this is due to Laurie Cook's work to create a clean invitation list.

Old Business:

- A. We have been invited to two parades and have not yet responded. Paul Ray pointed out that sometimes the Laingsburg and Durand parades end up on the same day. Aaron said many parade and float elements are being stored in Mark's barn. He will get in touch with Mark about those. Janet Kiley also mentioned we have large car magnets and Bailey Leppert suggested Laurie Cook's blue electric car. Stephen asked if there is a fee to participants. Aaron said no, but for Carriage Days, we do have to reach out to them to participate rather than receiving an invite. Laurie said Community Outreach committee will be happy to handle the parade registration.
- B. Stephen explained that we participated in the Kiwanis/Red Cross camel races. Aaron explained that he was the camel jockey. Stephen said it was a wonderful event and the Z Hall is very nice, renovated well, with good food. We finished in 4th place in race one and we tied for second in the second race. Stephen said it was great advertisement for us and we cheered very loud.
- C. Bailey explained the Lookouts program and encouraged members to send in summaries from local government meetings so we can be aware of local events. It will be shared at meetings and by email. Stephen said the list of local meetings is posted on the Shia Dems website. Janet Kiley stated that it is hard to get these meetings on the calendar, but it's a great opportunity for precinct delegates to participate. Invite friends to go with you. It shows others that people in their precinct are interested in what's going on.

New Business:

- a. Stephen explained that we used to be members of the Shiawassee Area Chamber of Commerce and suggested we should rejoin the Chamber to show that we are part of the community and business friendly. This would allow us to have 50% the rental meeting

spaces in the Armory. This helps us while we do not have a permanent location. The spaces meet our IT needs and are accessible. Paul Ray said he would like to know when we were members because he has been active since 2002 and does not believe we have been members before. Stephen said the Chamber told him we had been members, but did not give a year. Stephen explained it would cost \$350 per year. Stephen said it is helpful to have meetings there for executive team and with Patrice Martin. Aaron explained that becoming chamber members gives us a meeting space safety net in case we get bumped. Laurel Robb expressed support. Cheryl Farver asked what our arrangement is with Corunna Community Center. Aaron explained that we have booked this space for free with Corunna for the rest of the year, but we can be bumped by paying bookings with 72 hours' notice. Patty VanLuven asked if the Chamber does any lobbying activities because we should consider that. Laurie said she would recommend that we ask the local chamber these questions. Paul Ray said that previously the Chamber has been aligned with Republicans goals historically and that is not separate from the US Chamber of Commerce. Tammy Sanders would like to know what political topics the Chamber is aligned with, particularly guns. Kirk said that he feels the local chamber should be aligned with unions as their concerns are the same, but he feels they have voted along with the US Chamber of Commerce. He feels like this is an opportunity to show small business owners that unions are aligned with their concerns. Laurie stated that the social issues are shifting those Republican/Democrat lines, especially for younger business owners. They may have a different outlook than their parents' generation. It is an opportunity to be out in the community and forge those alliances. Laurel Robb agreed with Laurie and that too often Republicans have been louder than us and now is the time to step up and be out in public and be heard. Kristin said if we continue to be separated from former Republicans or young people who grew up Republican, we won't bridge those divides. We should show who we are. Step one is to meet them. Aaron suggested giving the Community Outreach committee to do research on our questions and then revisit this once we have that information, Paul questioned when we could use Chamber meetings to spread our message. Danny said he attended Chamber meetings for 10 years and never spoke about his political background. Danny pointed out that at the national level, the US Chamber supports primarily Republican policies. Kristin says it shows we want to be part of the community. Ann Arwin says discussing politics is not just stating whether you are a Republican or Democrat, that anytime you are discussing who gets resources and how much they cost, that is politics. Laurel thinks this would be an opportunity to understand why we feel the way we feel. Aaron moved to table the topic of rejoining the Chamber until the CO committee can generate a report on the advantages and disadvantages. Emily seconded. All ayes.

- b. Aaron said it is time for the spring roadside cleanup. The Shia Dems have adopted a stretch of M-52, three miles from Bennington Township Hall to Miller Rd. State says it needs to be between April 22-30. We report to Bennington Township Hall at 9 am either on a Saturday or Sunday. Brian True has the supplies (vests, grabbers, bags), Aaron suggested Sunday April 23 as primary day and Sunday April 30 as rain day. We usually get 4-6 people. Janet Horvath says eight people to pick up garbage and one person

driving is ideal. Paul Ray says it's a four hour job. We took a straw poll and Sunday April 23 won.

Good and Welfare:

- a. Aaron said that Corunna needs sponsors for their 4th of July fireworks show. Sponsors get their name displayed in McCurdy Park, stated on stage, listed on website, and given recognition on local radio broadcasts. Deadline is May 26. Laurie will find out about levels of support and we will make a decision at next meeting.
- b. Stephen shouted out UAW Region 1D for printing our programs.

Adjourn: Motion made to adjourn by Paul Ray and seconded by Cheryl Farver. All ayes.
Adjourned at 8:27 pm

Submitted by Bailey Leppert