

MINUTES
Lincoln County Democrats General Meeting
Wednesday, March 24, 2021

Chair Michael Gaskill brought the meeting to order at 6pm

Chair Gaskill reviewed ground rules for the meeting and how to interact and vote on the Zoom platform.

Approval of February Minutes

Chair Gaskill called for a motion to approve the February minutes. Eliot Sekuler seconded the motion. Former chair Steve Crandall clarified that voting members are Precinct Committee Persons, elected officials, the executive committee, all chairs of the executive committee, and delegates. The draft draft minutes posted on the Web site were approved by 16 voting members, none opposed.

Celebration of adoption of the American Rescue Plan

Chair Gaskill underscored the impact of the American Rescue Plan Act on Oregon and urged everyone to promote the success of this monumental legislation. He listed some highlights of the plan: eighty-six percent of all adults and children in the state will receive \$1,400 in relief; the state will receive \$2.6 billion, in addition to \$1.5 billion in local fiscal relief and \$1 billion for schools; and the child tax credit and health care premium subsidies, which will provide further relief. The Democratic Party of Oregon has graphics about the Act's impact, which Chair Gaskill encouraged people to share via social media so that people might understand and appreciate what the Democratic Party has accomplished for Americans through this legislation.

Upcoming Town Halls

Chair Gaskill announced an upcoming joint town hall with State Representative Gomberg and State Senator Dick Anderson and a town hall being held by US Representative Kurt Schrader. He encouraged people to participate and hold legislators accountable.

Candidate recruitment for local elections

Vice Chair Cherie Harbour, Chair Gaskill, IBEW Local 932 representative Eric Sherman, and Newport City Councilperson Cynthia Jacobi have together been working on recruiting candidates for open local positions in the upcoming special election.

The deadline for registration as candidates has passed, and now volunteers are needed to support progressives and Democrats running for local office endorsed by the Lincoln County Democrats.

Chair Gaskill emphasized that these local positions often go unfilled and are critical to the effective operation of local government agencies, such as water boards, conservation boards, port authorities, etc. He also noted that such positions can be used as resume-builders for those aiming for higher office, and so it is important to have progressive, Democratic representation at all levels of government.

Newport City Councilmember Cynthia Jacobi reported that she has been focusing on a competitive race in the school district's Zone 3. The 15-year incumbent is being challenged by Mike Rawls, a Democrat. Chair Gaskill added that some local races are in fact competitive. Jacobi noted that Democrats Peter Vince and Sentilla McKinley were also running in competitive school board races.

Update from Adrienne Green, Lincoln City Democrats Club

The Lincoln City Club is focusing on the Lincoln City Mayor's race, which includes three Democrats. The club is hosting a forum, most likely to take place on April 6, for those three candidates, and it may choose to endorse one. They plan to help support the candidate selected with phone banking and other advertising.

A Precinct Committee Person (PCP) has shared the Clackamas County PCP manual with the Lincoln City Club for training.

The group is also focused on North Lincoln County watershed issues. Schooner Creek and Drift Creek are warming, likely to due logging activity, and they will be looking for a speaker to discuss the issue.

Chair Gaskill noted that the open Lincoln City Mayoral seat served as the launch pad for Republican State Senator Dick Anderson, a reminder that local government positions matter not just for their immediate roles but also because they can serve as "farm teams" for higher office.

Approval of Budget for Support of Candidates Endorsed for May 18 Special Election

Chair Gaskill introduced Fundraising and Public Relations Chair Eliot Sekuler. Sekuler reported that because of the pandemic, normal fundraising events are

impossible, and he requested donations to help the Lincoln County Democrats support candidates, sharing Act Blue and PayPal links.

Sekuler then requested approval of funding to be used to support the campaign of a mayoral candidate if one is selected for endorsement by the Lincoln City Democrats. He reminded everyone that the previous mayoral race was decided for Republican Dick Anderson over Democrat Susan Wahlke by fewer than 20 votes. And, he reiterated that our region might today be represented by a Democratic State Senator had Dick Anderson not won the local mayoral race prior to the state senate election.

Sekuler shared the proposed advertising budget of \$600. The group discussed potential advertising platforms. There was a question about directing donations to the Lincoln City Club budget rather than the Lincoln County Democrats general budget. Treasurer Wendy Girard asked donors to contact her directly if they want their donations to go to the Lincoln City Club fund.

Chair Gaskill moved approval of the proposed budget to support the mayoral candidate endorsed by the Lincoln City Club. The proposal passed with 16 votes in favor and none opposed.

Letter from District 5 Democrats to Representative Kurt Schrader

Chair Gaskill reported that he and the other chairs of Democratic Party Committees within Congressional District 5 wrote a joint letter and press release regarding Representative Kurt Schrader's initial no-vote on the American Rescue Plan Act. Gaskill acknowledged that Representative Schrader did vote for the second iteration of the plan, and he added that Schrader has supported important legislation including HR1, and Schrader has changed his vote to support the PRO Act, which supports labor unions.

The group met with Schrader and were disappointed to find that he had not read the letter prior to their meeting. However, the meeting itself felt respectful and productive, and it is promising that Schrader has voted in favor of important legislation. Chair Gaskill encouraged everyone to contact Representative Schrader to support legislation that represents the interests of his constituency.

Chair Gaskill suggested that Schrader's opposition to the American Rescue Plan may have been in part due to his opposition to a federal \$15/hour minimum wage and an objection to the number of households receiving stimulus checks.

Carolyn Crandall added that Representative Schrader's unresponsiveness to

her letter to him regarding his no-vote makes her feel that she cannot rely on Schrader for constituent support on other issues. Chair Gaskill reiterated that it is important to contact our representatives to voice opinions on policy issues.

Redistricting

Chair Gaskill emphasized the importance of the current redistricting process, especially given that Oregon has picked up a seat as a result of the 2020 Census. Right-wing organizations like ALEC put a lot of funding into influencing the process in favor of Republicans, and so it is important for Democrats to participate via testimony. Gaskill noted that the urban-rural divide in Oregon does not directly translate to a liberal-conservative map.

Announcements from Elected Officials

State Representative David Gomberg

Representative Gomberg reported that Republicans in the State House are requiring every piece of legislation to be read into the record word for word, slowing down the legislative process significantly even for non-contested legislation. The pandemic is also impacting the legislative process, with one representative having tested positive for the COVID-19 virus.

Gomberg described support from the American Rescue Plan to state and local governments, and he expressed hope that funding might go to support approved infrastructure and capital projects, including the Big Creek Dams replacement, the Lincoln City Cultural Center, the Oregon Coast Aquarium renovation, Short Rail Transport, and the Toledo pool. He expressed concern that the allocation of the funding is disproportionately going toward Portland, when the rural areas of Oregon have been more seriously impacted by the pandemic.

Gomberg agreed with Chair Gaskill's concern over redistricting, and he recommended focusing on maintaining coastal integrity, rather than linking east-west and breaking up coastal representation.

He brought up the concern that vacation-home owners might be voting illegally against the economic and livability concerns of full-time residents.

Finally, Gomberg encouraged participation in the upcoming Town Hall.

Eliot Sekuler asked about Representative Gomberg's stance on minimum wage. Gomberg reported that he supported an increase in minimum wage, but not the \$17/hour state-wide increase that had been recently proposed, which he felt was too big of a jump for rural areas.

Newport City Councilmember Cynthia Jacobi

Newport City Councilmember Cynthia Jacobi reported that traffic in South Beach will be impacted by construction.

Construction of the new animal shelter in South Beach is beginning.

There will be fireworks on the 4th of July this year. The electric vehicle highway is expanding in Newport, including privately funded charging stations at Walmart, and the City Council will be looking at a construction excise tax for low-income house.

State Representative Kurt Schrader's Campaign Manager, Shane O'Brien

Campaign Manager Shane O'Brien stated that Schrader's priorities are shoring up safety net programs and that Schrader does support an increase in minimum wage using a regional approach. He reported that Schrader had supported many significant bills, including the the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, background checks for gun ownership, the Dream Act, the Equal Rights Amendment ratification date extension, the PRO Act, the For the People Act, the Violence Against Women Act, and the Farm Workforce Modernization Act. Schrader introduced a bill to fund study of zoonotic diseases to help prevent future pandemics. He stated that constituent services at his office can help people who did not receive the stimulus checks. Eliot Sekuler asked about Schrader's position on gun control, such as banning assault weapons. O'Brien stated that Schrader opposed such a ban. Chair Gaskill noted that there had been a mass shooting every day the previous week and expressed concern over Schrader's identification of himself as a "shooter" once at a town hall event.

Local Candidates Pitches

Peter Vince, running for Lincoln County School District Zone 4, and Susan Wahlke, running for Mayor of Lincoln City, described their platforms.

Announcements

There are three bills relating to plastic bag pollution for which the House Energy and Environment Committee is avoiding scheduling hearings.

One participant expressed concern that substitute teachers would be edged out of the state's PERS retirement program in legislation currently being considered.

Chair Gaskill invited everyone to bring updates about state legislation and other issues and announcements to future meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42pm