**The Lakewood Democratic Club**

**Minutes of Regular Meeting held June 24, 2020  
June 24, 2020  
Online space at zoom.us**

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by President Erik Meinhardt.

APPROVAL of the MINUTES of the meeting held May 28, 2020.

RECOGNITION OF NOTABLES –

County Council member Dale Miller; Board of Education member Ed Favre, City Council member Jason Shachner (Ward 2), County party city leader Karolyn Isenhart, magistrate William Vodrey, Board of Education member Mike Callahan, City Council members Tom Bullock and Tristan Rader (at-large), Board of education president Betsy Shaughnessy, State representative Juanita Brent (HD-12), County party vice chair Cindy Marx.

The president reported that the June 25 Lakewood Democratic Club meeting was moved up one day so as not to compete with a Cuyahoga County Democratic Party event (7:08)

Councilperson Rader updates on Public Works (7:09)

* Lakewood continues recycling, help by recycling only clean cans, cartons, jars, bottles, and boxes. Consult cuyahogarecycles.org/howtorecycle
* Rust Belt Riders offers dropoff composting, in Lakewood Park, for $10/month. Consult rustbeltriders.com/join

Marx praised the president for accommodating county party event (7:12)

The president talked about racial justice, inclusion, the Democratic Club, etc. (7:13)

The president introduced Juanita Brent (7:17)

**STATE REP. JUANITA BRENT**

State representative Brent discussed her proposed amendments, to House Bill 665, which would have applied the state fair’s prohibition on Confederate memorabilia to county fairs, and which recently received national news coverage (7:18)

Brent explained that the origin of the amendments is further back than most people suppose. She is ranking member on the House Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, and last year attended about 20 county fairs—both facts which take many people by surprise because they expect a white person—and saw Confederate flags all over at the fairs.

Brent discussed the Civil War, and stated that Lincoln pledged that as president he would eliminate slavery; Steve Bennett briefly pointed out that this is historically inaccurate; Brent disagreed and continued. (7:26)

Brent said that county fairs are spaces in which, going back to childhood, she has been made to feel unwelcome.

The premise of House Bill 665 was to modernize the “red book” for county fairs, and Brent’s amendment related to Confederate memorabilia proposed only to apply the standard already used at the Ohio State Fair.

Brent related that she talked to other members, and Republicans all said that they would have to consult the House Speaker. The day of the committee, the chairman asked her to pull the amendment, adding that he fostered two African American boys and expected he would appear racist for opposing it. Brent said she advised it was a moment to choose a side, and went ahead.

Brent said that in the committee, opponents protested that her amendment would infringe on freedom of speech, but the Ohio State Fair has had the policy since 2015 without problems. The committee chair prevented Brent from speaking at one point. (7:30)

The following day was a 12-hour session, of the full House, during which the Speaker ignored Brent to proceed on another amendment to HB 665, exempting county fairs from paying for water and sewer service.

Brent said that when her amendment received time at last, she emphasized inclusion; other supportive testimony included a description of how the Navy has also banned Confederate items; how the amendment would be legally compliant with the First Amendment; and personal testimony from people about how the presence of Confederate memorabilia created uncomfortable and unwelcoming spaces.

One Republican joined Democrats in voting for Brent’s amendment (Brent was probably referring to Rep. Niraj Antani based on House session journals) and the amendment failed. Brent said she followed this with another amendment, restricting state funding to fairs which permitted Confederate memorabilia, and it was also defeated, by a strictly party-line vote. (7:38)

“That was the moment I realized… my life and my presence at the statehouse means nothing to them. It was a hurtful moment. In my heart I was crying,” Brent confided.

Brent described her experiences as a legislator more generally, and hate mail. She said her legislative aide, in only her third day on the job, was called every vile name imaginable by angry callers. Noted that two weeks earlier, House Minority Leader Emilia Sykes received threats of death against her and her father (both African American).

**Discussion with Rep. Brent**

Question about the possibility of reintroducing the proposal as legislation. Brent said that this is her intention. (7:44)

Question about whether the vote might have been on party lines in other eras. Brent said that many Republicans told her privately that they wanted to support the amendment but felt obliged to back party leadership. Brent: “I put my people over my party.”

Request for Brent to discuss racism as a public health crisis resolution in Ohio Senate. (7:46) Brent said Senators Williams and Craig have introduced Senate Concurrent Resolution 14. Historically large number of people signed up to testify.

Provisions of RPHC resolution include:

* A glossary of terms and definitions concerning racism and health equity
* Educational efforts to address and dismantle racism
* Promoting community engagement, with communities of color
* All human resources, vendor selection and grant management activities to employ a racial equity lens
* Etc.

The president said that Ohio is the first state to hold a hearing on legislation like this (7:50)

Brent said that resolution has considerable public support, and some receptiveness within Ohio Senate, but House Speaker is determined to have nothing to do with.

The president and Brent discussed the governor’s exclusion of African American input from his proposal about policing. (7:52)

Question about investigation of hate-mail senders, etc. Brent said that they identify themselves with names and contact information, actually. (7:53)

Miller mentioned that County Council has introduced a RPHC measure, with sponsorship sufficient to guarantee an affirmative vote. (7:55)

**Brent closing remarks**

* Please give your support to House candidates Monique Smith (whose opponent Dave Greenspan voted against both amendments to HB 665), Joan Sweeney; and to Ohio Senate candidate Tom Jackson
* Lakewood’s state rep. Mike Skindell has always been a supporter, encouraging me, he cracks me up, in my top one or two favorite people in the Ohio House
* Don’t be afraid to contact any and all state legislators. Challenge them on why the legislature is going on a long recess, right now, rather than working to solve problems.

**DEVON WHITE**

The president introduced Devon White, organizer of the June 13 Black Lives Matter unity rally in Lakewood Park. Commented that “It’s great to see people, who see that there’s a problem and step up.” (7:59)

White introduced himself as an African American gay male, who has held all kinds of jobs. (8:00)

White described the background to the Lakewood rally

* Mariah Davies (who identifies as a queer Latinx woman) contacted White, about the need to respond to video of George Floyd’s death, and unsure how
* Both call Lakewood home and felt the community should participate in nationwide demonstrations in some way
* White warned that leading an event would require being prepared, and prepared to receive criticism no matter what
* White had been part of organizing Columbus protest at which police pepper sprayed Rep. Joyce Beatty (among many others)
* Afterward, he said, members the LGBT community criticized the demonstration for not managing to stay completely peaceful. White reminded people that Pride Month commemorates the Stonewall Riot, in response to police brutality; “It was not called the Stonewall Peacefully Sit-at-home Protest.”

White described the June 13 Lakewood event

* The event went 99% perfectly
* White received criticism for having a white man speak first. Responded that African Americans didn’t create the system which is a problem, and should not be expected to take point on destroying it.
* First speaker identified himself as someone raised to racism, then left it, then became antiracist
* State Sen. Nickie Antonio spoke
* One African American attendee booed, disagreed with, everyone. White replied that they were doing something, but he was doing nothing.

White described his experience as a student at Penn State University (8:12)

* Hoped to be a resident assistant, also noted only one in the entire university was African American at the time
* Application did not make it beyond the first round. White asked how he might improve.
* The woman who responded to his inquiry said that he had done everything right, but “we thought you looked dangerous.”
* White’s father said “they called you a nigger without using the word.”
* Videos of Aubrey, Taylor, Floyd, touched directly on White’s own experience with being presumed dangerous simply for being Black.
* Did not blame the woman, but instead the educational system, and the culture
* Spoke with many people afterward, including Penn State president, and the university no longer employs the woman
* White left Penn State after that semester

White said that trans people of color experience tremendous abuse (8:15)

White thanked the City of Lakewood for being supportive

White discussed what happens next

* He will be organizing another protest
* U.S. needs further education about the history of racism, about the exploitation by which the country was built, about broken promises
* Said that policing in America originated in hunting down persons escaped from slavery
* Problems at hand are local and need to be fixed locally (8:20)
* Documenting what happens, on video, has made an enormous difference (8:22)

**Discussion period**

Question about running for office. White said it has been a thought. Explained that grew up in Lakewood, and considers it his home, although he currently lives in Cleveland owing to circumstances of the pandemic.

Shaughnessy mentioned review of Lakewood schools curriculum. (8:24)

Question about the need for committee volunteers. Shaugnessy replied that she would check.

Sarah Kepple encouraged White to run for office some day. (8:26)

**COUNCILPERSON SARAH KEPPLE**

Kepple reviewed where we’ve been and where we’re going, as a city

* Lakewood is land once home to Native Americans; recently heard from an indigenous person who was a victim of racial profiling in Lakewood some years ago, but approved of improvements by the community since
* Lakewood like most communities has redlining in its history
* Lakewood was ahead of the nation on women’s right to vote, and the effort was inclusive, intersectional
* A rainbow Pride flag over City Hall was “a kerfuffle” some years ago and now it’s routine; city will be exchanging for an inclusive Pride flag soon
* Home to the first openly LGBT Ohio House rep, and first openly gay woman in Ohio Senate
* Multiple recent demonstrations in support of Black Lives Matter
* Communications received by city council have also been supportive

Kepple described the work within (8:30)

* Introduced a resolution at June 15 city council meeting, supported by all of council, and mayor
* Resolution committed to the 2020 YWCA 21-day racial equity and social justice challenge
* Is a free program, many others are participating, and all are encouraged to
* This is meant to be transformative (not performative)

Kepple described the work without: changing outcomes, being proactive (8:34)

* A communication introduced at June 15 council meeting, referred to Public Safety Committee, recommended the Campaign Zero “8 Can’t Wait” policies
* Also members of council have joined a call from 25 African American council members, from Ohio cities, to sign an ally letter
* Called for examining how Lakewood’s police force functions, inside and outside the community
* We have also discussed so-called “less lethal” weapons, e.g. batons, shields, rubber bullets (which are actually coated metal), “beanbags” (which contain coated buckshot), gasses and sprays

Kepple recommended calls to action (8:43)

* Communicate with local government, including Public Safety Committee; provide an ecomment or ask to speak at Monday’s committee meeting
* Be aware of issues beyond policing, including housing, public health (lead safety), education (8:45)
* Aside, noting that council now closed-captions meetings, and is working to provide more information in multiple languages
* Ohio Fairness Act is still needed even after recent Supreme Court decision; Republican justices who joined in seem to invite resubmission of the same policy but with more professionalism, as with the Muslim Ban
* “Stand Your Ground” legislation is bad and should be opposed
* Census is important to participate in and promote
* Voting rights are critical
* YWCA challenge and engaging with the Public Safety Committee

**Discussion period**

The president stated that virtual events (unlike events held in the Woman’s Club Pavilion) can continue beyond 9 p.m. without being fined by the city; recalls that as recently as 2016, the Hillary Clinton campaign had to withdraw African American volunteers from Lakewood because of the negative reception they encountered; apologized for filibustering

Guest comment about Lakewood and policing, and inquiry from the president about absence of unconscious bias training. (8:52) Kepple agreed that there is a cultural issue, said that unfortunately bias training has not changed outcomes, according to study.

City Council member Neff encouraged people to contribute to the meeting on Monday. Kepple concurred. (8:56)

Questions about preventing the hiring of police with bad records, and about the officer who broke a girl’s jaw at Madison Library in 2017.

* Kepple, Bullock, said that they believe he is no longer on the force. (8:57)
* Bullock: Hiring, and discipline, are products of policy and of union contract terms.

Bullock commented favorably about Lakewood Police and in support of need for improvement. Said that Lakewood conducted a review about three years ago. Said that problem of racism is larger than policing, responding starts with public officials, extends everywhere including all public employees, and the private sector.

REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

President: Democratic Club continues review of bylaws, there is no July meeting (9:00)

First Vice President: Democratic Club welcomes ideas for programs (9:01)

The president provided information about Lakewood Democratic Club Book Club.

Second Vice President: No information about Lakewood Democratic Club 2020 Summer Supper, but the board will make some final decision by the end of July (9:02)

Treasurer: Happy Pride; make sure I know if you are on the call with another person but only one of you registered; Lakewood Democratic Club treasury balance is $8,193.18; Club membership is 121; Health tip is get enough sleep; shared three jokes. (9:03)

County Council member Dale Miller (9:06)

* County Council will hold a hearing on the use of force during demonstrations in Cleveland
* County has released more than 40% of county jail population; 160 total people tested positive for COVID-19 at the jail, nearly all are recovered, as of June 24 only one person is sick with it, and so far no fatalities from it.

City Leader Karolyn Isenhart: July 1 is a required Zoom meeting for members of the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party Executive Committee to vote on endorsements for the state board of education; the Women’s Caucus has activities coming up; it’s time to phone bank for Joe Biden, and a new regional field organizer is starting next week; share time with his campaign, or Monique Smith’s, or Rep. Brent’s (9:09)

Kara Krivosh

* The Giving Tree Project is live in Lakewood
* The animal shelter needs support, I will provide a handmade Dem face mask if you donate $50, just let the president know

The meeting adjourned at 9:13 p.m.

Event notes prepared by Matt Kuhns on June 25, 2020 and revised July 7, 2020..

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Secretary Approval: sign date

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President Approval: sign date