**The Lakewood Democratic Club**

**Minutes of Regular Meeting held April 30, 2020**

**Online space at zoom.us**

**Erik Meinhardt, President**

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 7:09 p.m. by President Erik Meinhardt.

Officers present were President Erik Meinhardt, First Vice-President Maureen Dostal, Secretary, Matt Kuhns and Treasurer, Cindy Strebig. The President chaired the meeting. The Secretary took minutes.

APPROVAL of the previous MINUTES of the meeting held Feb. 27, 2020. [n.b. March meeting was cancelled because of COVID-19 pandemic and Stay at Home order, in response to which the executive committee organized a virtual April meeting.]

RECOGNITION OF NOTABLES –

Current officials (non-candidates) in attendance: Cuyahoga County Democratic Party City Leader Karolyn Isenhart, Lakewood City Council president Dan O’Malley, City Council members Tess Neff (ward 1), Jason Shachner (ward 2), John Litten (ward 3), Sarah Kepple and Tom Bullock (at-large), Lakewood Board of Education members Mike Callahan, Emma Petrie-Barcelona and Betsy Shaughnessy, County Council member Dale Miller, Mayor Meghan George, State Senator Nickie Antonio, State Representative Michael Skindell, Judge Gayle Williams-Byers

Candidates in attendance: Lisa Forbes (Court of Appeals), William Vodrey (Court of Common Pleas)

Isenhart thanks the club on behalf of former Lakewood City Council member Monique Smith, Democratic nominee for state representative in House District 16

**OHIO PRIMARY RECAP**

The President gave a summary of Ohio primary results [delayed by the cancellation of March 17 in-person voting and the extension of voting by mail through April 27], noting that he will also moderate a larger panel discussion on May 5. (7:18)

* Cuyahoga County voter turnout 22.4%, slightly less than 2018 primary
* Lakewood slightly higher turnout than county average; 80% of primary ballots were Democratic
* Issue 28 school levy approved with 76+%
  + *Petrie-Barcelona suggests this may be the largest margin of approval for a levy ever in Lakewood*
  + *Betsy Shaughnessy expresses gratitude to voters for approval*
* Issue 33 county HHS levy approved with 69+%
  + *Miller expresses thanks for support of Issue 33*
  + *Bullock compliments Miller, et al., for advocacy of Issue 33*
* Round-up of county voting in primaries for president, US House, Court of Appeals, Court of Common Pleas, Ohio House, County Council and Count Prosecutor

**OHIO SENATE UPDATES, NICKIE ANTONIO**

Antonio begins with some comments on the primary (7:33)

* Excited for Monique Smith’s chances in HD-16
* All Democratic state senators up for reelection are opposed
* Possible gains include Crystal Lett in Franklin County, and nominee (still to be determined) for Bowling Green district
* Every extra Democrat in either chamber will help, goal of breaking opposition supermajorities

Seeking a solution for nonprofit organizations which face wholesale layoffs

Possible election adaptations for COVID-19

* Legislation to permit a 100% by-mail general election, if need be, in draft stage
* Recommending that postmark deadline be Election Day, to reduce confusion from multiple deadlines/dates
* Legislation in both chambers to allow online requests for ballots

Held online town hall in April with state reps from SD-23

Antonio senate office has never been busier, mostly with unemployment system questions

Face masks when you go out

* Governor’s contradictory messages this week departed from caution, confused the issue
* Antonio encourages everyone to wear them
* Group sews and donates masks where needed, e-mail [nickie@nickieantonio.com](mailto:nickie@nickieantonio.com) to join
* Your mask protects others, not you, so it’s a courtesy

Question from Glenn Campbell: can Ohio offer prepaid return postage for all vote-by-mail ballots?

* The idea is good, but doubts regarding Secretary of State, who caused much chaos around primary

Question from First Vice President: Are restaurant workers in line for any support? (7:46)

* Ohio unemployment system was already inadequate, in both structure and funding. No discussion of reforms in legislature, so far. Suspects concern about costs of unemployment compensation is driving premature reopening of businesses. The big lesson here is that low-income workers’ lack of a living wage, even in ordinary conditions, needs to change.

Question from William Vodrey: what happens to the 2020-21 state budget? (7:49)

* “It’s scary. It’s very scary.” Rainy day fund balance is about $2.5 billion while state government revenues are down more than $5 billion. Future of capital budget is uncertain, and Republicans have reappropriations for capital fund on hold, out of concern for “bad optics.” Disagree with this choice.

Discussion of federal aid and Cuyahoga County (7:52)

* Miller: County receiving $215 million from federal legislation. Currently restricted to expenses “directly” related to COVID-19, and county will likely need to return 50% or more of funds; currently seeking permission for broader use.
* Antonio: Has contacted all of Lakewood’s congressional representatives’ offices about this, but the rule is at Treasury Secretary’s discretion.
* Miller: Congressional legislation could overrule the Treasury.
* Michelle Pomerantz: County government will work to use as much of the money as we can, legally

**OHIO HOUSE UPDATES, MIKE SKINDELL**

Recommends two House candidates for support: Smith, and Phil Robinson who very narrowly defeated a Republican incumbent in 2018 (7:56)

Concerned about House Speaker’s intent for staff to return to Rife Center next week

* House staff have been working effectively from home; Skindell’s office has fielded 200 calls in recent weeks, an unusually high volume
* Skindell’s staffer lives with a nonagenarian mother

House committees are meeting again, and voting may resume next week

Ohio government finances

Expectation that capital spending will mostly go to state infrastructure, now, and funding for community projects e.g. Beck Center will be much more limited

Transportation revenue from gas tax has fallen off significantly

House Speaker has suggested Ohio will spend most of the rainy day fund.

Balancing the books at end of fiscal year will likely require legislative intervention

Thanks for concern about mother’s health, and notes that both former mayor Cain and Rosemary Feighan DeJohn (sister of former Congressman Ed Feighan) are currently at Ennis Court with health challenges

**CUYAHOGA COUNTY UPDATES**

Michelle Pomerantz, county director of regional collaboration (8:04)

* COVID-19 and its impacts are now the major concern of county government
* Local business resources include business stabilization program grants, and a hotline for help with navigating Payroll Protection Program etc. (216) 452-9714
* Cuyahoga County government is one of five Ohio organizations to receive direct relief from federal treasury (mentioned above). County is trying to use the funds to meet current and future needs.

Dale Miller, County Council member (8:09)

* A contact tracing program is essential for managing the COVID-19 pandemic
* Nursing home outbreaks are another serious concern

Pomerantz (8:11)

* County jail population reduced out of safety concerns, from > 2,000 to < 1,000
* As of today, county COVID-19 statistics are 1,211 confirmed cases, 432 probable cases, 83 deaths (outside of Cleveland)
* Census 2020
* Lakewood proved hard to count in 2010, issues with rental housing, and English as a second language households
* Credits George administration for contributing to 61.3% response rates so far this year, ahead of 55.7% county average
* Deadline for completion being pushed back, but please respond to the census now

**LAKEWOOD GOVERNMENT UPDATES**

City Council member John Litten, Health & Human Services Committee chair (8:17)

* The Lakewood Department of Human Services, and Lakewood Community Services Center, are coordinating efforts to help the vulnerable
* New local cases of COVID-19 declined by late April, while testing has increased (but it is not yet remotely where needed)
* Identifying hotspots/clusters e.g. nursing homes is now a priority
* Any vaccine is a year or more away
* Services for seniors
  + Almost 7,000 meals delivered to 232 residents by staff and volunteers in recent weeks
  + Department of Aging makes wellness-check calls to several hundred seniors, and receives inbound calls seeking help
  + Department of Aging partnered with local businesses to provide bags of food to senior-living building residents, to allow them to reduce trips to stores; another distribution planned for May
* Youth division active efforts
* Unfortunately domestic violence call numbers have risen

Council President Dan O’Malley (8:27)

* Review of process selecting Carnegie Development and “One Lakewood Place” plan for former Lakewood Hospital property
* Developer has now terminated its agreement with Lakewood
* City of Lakewood satisfied every obligation under the agreement
  + Developer’s suggestions to the contrary are wrong
  + Environmental issues at the site were what could reasonably have been expected and have been fully remediated

Mayor Meghan George (8:34)

* My administration worked to support the project and agreement, including by approving overtime to keep Lakewood’s responsibilities on schedule
* Legal counsel has advised against additional comment beyond the [statement and timeline on city’s web site](http://www.onelakewood.com/mayor-meghan-f-george-statement-on-one-lakewood-place/), but ready to discuss further as soon as this is practical

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CANDIDATE REMARKS

President (8:38)

* Club activities will be virtual for some time; send ideas
* We will share opportunities to stay active
* Save the Post Office campaign
* Book Club is also virtual

First Vice President (8:42)

* Environmental and Green New Deal presentation, planned for this month, will move to May
* Women’s History, cancelled along with March meeting, will reschedule

Second Vice President (8:43)

* Board will make a decision in June about Summer Supper planned for July 30

Treasurer (8:44)

* 111 paid members
* Bank balance $8,396.30
* FEC quarterly report filed
* Health tip: continue to floss

Secretary (8:45)

* Recognition of communication co-chairs Emily Christescu and Teresa Schleicher

Trudi Hutchinson will host a virtual house party May 7 for All On The Line redistricting campaign (8:46)

Political activism chair Jay Ketchaver: Participate in Take Action Tuesday and The Big Send (8:48)

City Leader Karolyn Isenhart: Women’s Caucus brunch will be a virtual event (8:49)

Council member Kepple: At Monday City Council meeting I will introduce a communication in support of wearing masks in public, and welcome any public comment ahead of time

Board of Education member Petrie-Barcelona (8:51)

* Schools had about three days’ notice to convert from regular operations to 100% distance learning
* Seniors will receive degrees but any kind of graduation event will have to happen later on
* Schools remain in operation, though doors are closed

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING – May 28, 2020.

The president announced the meeting’s conclusion at 8:54 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Matt Kuhns, Secretary on May 1, 2020.

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Secretary Approval: sign date

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President Approval: sign date