**The Lakewood Democratic Club**

**Minutes of Regular Meeting held** **Feb 25, 2021
Online space at zoom.us**

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 7:02 by President Erik Meinhardt.

Officers present were President Erik Meinhardt, First Vice-President Maureen Dostal, Second VP Mark Schneider Secretary, Treasurer Catie McMahon, Secretary Nicole Parke. The President chaired the meeting. The Secretary took notes.

APPROVAL of the MINUTES - The body approved the meeting minutes from 10/29/2020, 11/19/2020, and 01/28/2020.

HOUSEKEEPING - Erik reminded everyone to renew their membership. Erik will be sending out a list of those who still need to renew.

RECOGNITION OF NOTABLES – Sara Fagnilli (candidate for Lakewood Municipal Court Judge), School Board Member Betsy Shaugnessy, County Councilman Dale Miller, Judge Steve Gaul, Judge Deborah Turner, Judge William Vodrey, Judge Mary Eileen Kilbane, Judge Maureen Clancy, State Senator Nickie Antonio, Councilperson Tess Neff (candidate for Lakewood Municipal Court Judge), School Board Member Ed Favre, State Representative Juanita Brent, Councilperson Jason Shachner, CCDP City Leader Karolyn Isenhart, Councilperson Tristan Rader, Councilperson Sarah Kepple, State Representative Stephanie Howse, State Representative Phil Robinson, Councilperson Tom Bullock

Kyle Baker announced candidacy for Lakewood City Council-at-large.

New members Melissa and Hunter Bostwick-Belanger and Andrew Harant introduced themselves.

**STATE REPRESENTATIVE PHIL ROBINSON**

Intro

* Dad & husband, 2 kids, live in Solon; sister is stand-up comedian who just got tv show!
* district is heavily gerrymandered
* first African-American to hold seat
* wants to make sure state government works for everyone
* passionate that all are represented at the table

**STATE REPRESENTATIVE STEPHANIE HOWSE**

Intro

* represents cleveland, garfield hts, newburgh hts
* serving fourth term
* from cleveland
* caregiver to mother, mentor to many, public servant at heart
* wants to keep government connected to everyday people

**Q: Instead of spending $50 million on an ad campaign, what can Ohio’s leaders do to make Ohio a more progressive state?**

Howse: ohio is not progressive state. lack of growth is reflection of policies that have been in place for far too long. tax policy has disinvested in local communities. Need Ohio Fairness Act. There is an obsession with women’s bodies and uteruses. Need to declare racism a public health crisis and ensure protections for people of color.

Robinson: In addition to everything rep howse said, universal pre-kindergarten & full-day kindergarten, local government funds, school funding, paid family leave, equity

**Q: What can we hope for in redistricting this year?**

Robinson: ohio has been very good at gerrymandering. Ohio voters are 51% republican, but state legislature is vastly more conservative. delay in census data is going to make redistricting a very tight timeline.

Howse: need to lift up ohioans voices in this process. Democratic party has come up short. Those who have the numbers will have their way. Important for people to engage in this process. need to get more progressive voices in the state legislature.

**Q: How did Rep Robinson flip district in 2018?**

Robinson: Ran in 2016 and lost. saw woman in grocery store who encouraged him to run again. In 2018 ran aggressive grassroots campaign. invested in social media. focused on kitchen table issues (schools, accessibility, small businesses, healthcare); opportunity, fair play, equity

**Q: How is ODP/party reaching potential democratic voters?**

Howse: whatever we are seeking, we are the answer to. No one knows your community better than you. we have lost ability to connect authentically. our values are everyone getting ahead. Abortion, religion, guns have been used to divide and distract people from the real problems at hand. Showing people we care is the way to transform Ohio.

**Q: Lakewood is predominantly white community, but we encourage dialogue on issues of race. What would it mean to declare racism a public health crisis?**

Howse: you can’t fix a problem that you aren’t willing to acknowledge. government should be looking at our policies and systems where racism is part of the structure. for a significant amount of time, the decision makers excluded large populations of people. not happenstance that racism is written into our laws. covid made it clear that our systems were not designed for majority of people

**Q: How do we make Ohio more fair and equitable?**

Robinson: need to declare racism public health crisis. racism has hurt our country as a whole. education, economic development, healthcare have all been impacted by racist policies. ohio is not a red state; we just always have the same people running ohio the wrong way. need politicians not afraid to stand up.

**Q: Would you share personal experience as black candidate and black elected official?**

Howse: in the statehouse, no one wanted to discuss “racism as a public health crisis” for fear of saying the wrong thing / being seen as racist. Worst experiences have been with state highway patrol and sergeant-at-arms. Once, security at statehouse followed her to her office demanding to see her ID. but, behavior complaint was dismissed because technically the rules allowed him to do so.

Robinson: when candidate in 2018, sat around table with democratic leaders who told him he can’t put his face on literature. knocking on doors with campaign manager, someone called police on them. racism is both overt & covert; you constantly pick and choose battles. as black male politician, if you raise your voice people get very concerned. constantly trying to predict four steps ahead. at clambake during campaign, was only black person in attendance. According to politico, state legislatures getting more cisgender, white and male.

**Q: How can the Lakewood Dems be better allies?**

Howse: listen to black women. people have been conditioned to think that their voice isn’t valuable. Look at the opportunities in your community, are they available to everyone? partner with black people. speak up. if you know something is wrong, say something.

Robinson: exhausting to always be the person addressing it. speak up; there is strength in numbers. support minorities for office. continue supporting after they’re elected. put the pressure on.

**Q: After the George Floyd incident, has anything changed in Ohio or the Statehouse?**

Howse: at least got people to pause for a moment. has not moved people to understand that we need change in culture of police and law enforcement. way too many white people believe that the only way to get ahead is by not lifting up black people. how can we get white people to acknowledge this isn’t right and things really need to change? What are people afraid of? Black people are remigrating to the South, because the midwest is no longer welcoming.

Robinson: George Floyd reaction didn’t change anything in action. need to change the composition of state’s leaders. white americans have most benefited from obamacare. systematically pitting people against each other has been successful in keeping us from lifting everyone up.

**Q: What are some resources that we should read or watch to be better allies?**

robinson: How to Be an Antiracist [by Ibram X Kendi]; The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together by Heather McGee

howse: just do the work; be a lifelong learner. continue to engage. as long as your intention is good, you will get there

**REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

President: Chuck shaugnessy & emma petrie barcelona doing audit of the books. So far all good. reminder to renew membership!

First Vice President: thankful for reps howse & robinson for attending & for those in state legislature fighting for us. if anyone has suggestions for speakers please let her know

Political Activism: call representative kaptur, senator brown, senator portman - we need to pass covid relief. Also, need to pass For the people act!

Book Club: still discussing A Promised Land by Barack Obama, parts 5 & 6. Also watched “All In”. For March 6th, watching “Crip Camp”. Zoom link in latest email.

Second Vice President: hope that once vaccinations occur, we can get together for events! thanks to speakers & thankful to celebrate Black History

Treasurer: Balance of $9,736.72. Over 45 members have renewed membership.

Secretary: Now that past minutes are approved, will get them up on the website.

**UPDATES**

State legislature - Senator Antonio: wonderful part of serving in Columbus is great Democratic colleagues. makes it manageable. First time ever, bipartisan bill to end death penalty. four republicans on the bill. companion legislation in the house. Fairness Act passed in Congress; announcing Fairness Act update in state leg next week. Also working on budget.

County Council - Dale Miller: selection of Christopher V from Solon to be new county sheriff, will be installed March 9

City Council - Sarah Kepple: this week first community engagement meeting on Intergenerational Community Center. next meeting march 23rd at 6pm. if can’t attend, also a survey. tree ordinance, need to keep up with trees that need to come down and keep up tree canopy. hilliard rd bridge project will be starting in 2023, county accepting feedback in survey. Lakewood Community Relations Advising Commision has posted survey to help ensure welcoming community. Local board of tax review looking for people to serve to help residents with taxes. Asked for “term sheet” from second-choice developer to work on One Lakewood Center where hospital was.

Tom Bullock: need to be considerate of post-covid world when making decision on hospital development. we only get one shot to set up downtown. Traffic safety issue to address following tragic accident over the weekend. may need traffic calming. dealing with complaints of harassment/stalking that working to address.

School Board - Betsy Shaughnessy president of School Board this year! focus on getting kids back into school. Hired meghan nitzwicki as new superintendent. She was asst superintendent and has worked well with Dr. Barnes. 700+ staff members have received first covid vaccine. March 1 meeting will include report on schools’ ventilation. 75% of kids are in school every other day. Holding conversations on race & racism, how to incorporate in curriculum. Hope to include anti-racism.

Ed Favre: March 9 staff will receive second dose of covid vaccine.

County Party - Karolyn Isenhart: CCDP spring fundraiser hasn’t been set yet. Ads are due for annual journal, Lakewood Dems usually takes ad out. New ODP chair is organizer & activist. Hoping to get her in at Lakewood Dems.

Member Steve Bennet at Ennis Court recovering from knee surgery. Member Andy Meyer moving to Chesapeake, Virginia.

Where was the first Rockport cemetery? St. Charles & Detroit, SE corner

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING - Thursday, March 25, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT - The meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm.

Event notes prepared by Nicole Parke on February 25, 2021

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Secretary Approval: sign date

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President Approval: sign date

**Resources:**

* Cove Intergenerational Center – next meeting 3/23/21 6pm

 Cove Info & Survey: <http://www.onelakewood.com/cove-church-redevelopment/>

* Tree Ordinance coming soon! to a Public Works & Sustainability Committee Meeting Zoom

 Want to speak or submit written comment? Contact me for info:  sarah.kepple@lakewoodoh.net,  216.200.5050

* Hillard Road Bridge (to Rocky River) to be replaced construction starting 2023

 Info & Survey: <http://www.onelakewood.com/cuyahoga-county-seeking-comment-on-hilliard-road-bridge-project-in-rocky-river-and-lakewood/>

* Lakewood Community Relations Advisory Commission (LCRAC) survey

 <http://www.onelakewood.com/help-make-lakewood-a-better-place/>

* Want to serve on the Lakewood Board of Tax Review?

 <http://www.onelakewood.com/lakewood-city-council-seeks-applicants-to-serve-on-local-board-of-tax-review/>

* 21 Day Racial Equity & Social Justice Challenge. It starts Monday, March 1 - <https://www.ywcaofcleveland.org/eliminate-racism/21-day-racial-equity-challenge/>
* Update on Downtown Development: <http://www.onelakewood.com/downtowndevelopment/>