

MINUTES APPROVED
Wilton Democratic Committee
March 4, 2008 Meeting

PRESENT: John Kalamarides (Chair), Lois Alcosser, Deborah McFadden, Fred Herot, Art Shulman, Toni Lee, Bob Morgan, Ted Hoffstatter, Kathleen Warner, Margaret DeRose, Sharon Grace

GUESTS: Herman Telyan, Collin Warner, Tom Dec, Rasmus Kleis Nielson, Bruce Hampson

7:36 – meeting is brought to order by John Kalamarides

The minutes of the February meeting are approved unanimously with two changes – the date should be February 12 and the name Dec should be added in the list of guests.

No Treasurer's Report

Jon Tan has commitments in Chicago for the next few months and cannot continue as treasurer. John Kalamarides asks that people consider serving in this important post.

Volunteers of the Month are Richard Creeth, Kathleen Warner and Fred Herot, who responded to a call to attend the nominating committee meeting with only 20 minutes of notice. Also, Charlie Lewis is a volunteer of the month for his diligent work answering questions from the chair about the bylaws.

Delegate Selection for four Conventions

- The state convention (May 10)
- The state house conventions (May 20)
- The state senate convention (May 19)
- The Congressional convention (May 12)

State convention delegates will elect the state central representatives for our district.

- Martha Aasen and Mark Markus have been our 26th Dist. Representatives
- Jason Bartlett state rep from Bethel has said he wants to run for that position against Mark Markus – he has presented to Ridgefield DTC and will present to us on April 1
- Mark Markus will be here on April 1, also.

Martha Aasen will be coming as well.

The state convention delegates will also meet on April 24 in Westport to elect state committee reps and then go onto the May 10th State Convention. At the state convention electors will be selected, party rules changed, party endorsement of Dem National Committee Members. Karen Dolan from Redding & Ellen Camhi from Stamford, for example, are DNC members.

John Kalamarides circulates the sign up sheet for conventions.

Non DTC members can be delegates too.

A letter to the editor is suggested to reach out to Dems at Large and tell them they can be delegates.

CAUCUS

On April 1 we'll have a regular meeting and a caucus. Deb moves caucus be at 7pm and DTC meeting at 7:30pm. Unanimously carries. Art suggests we communicate this in advance. Letter to the editor/press release about the caucus and on website.

NATIONAL Convention information

March 19 is the national convention district level caucus. Clinton people caucus to support (contact Susan Cocco or Jason Bartlett for Clinton, Lex Paulson 4th CD coordinator for Obama).

Kathleen Warner notes that there are many ways to get to the convention as a volunteer even if you aren't a delegate.

Guest Speaker

Rasmus Kleis Nielson arrives and is a Ph.D. in Communications at Columbia University. He is studying at the roll of volunteers in campaigns. His dissertation is about the election 2008 and getting out the vote.

He wants to know people and know members of local political organizations and unions over time and on election day. Going to meetings of districts in NY, NJ & CT to meet people. He is only studying Democrats since he also has worked for candidates and cannot justify working for the Republicans, whose policies he does not believe in.

Selectmen's Report

Ted Hoffstatter gives his report

1. Budget – tomorrow night is the vote on the budget and they are trying to keep it low this year. Rising energy Costs are a big budget problem. 5.5% increase in the town budget. Couldn't give the library all it wanted or DPW the new excavator. Can't add manpower to Police or fire – fuel costs are a big problem.
2. Charter Update – the BOS has gone article by article discussing openly where we need to consider changes. BOS keeping a running tally of comments and they have completed Articles 5 and 6. Toni asks if it isn't the charter commission can do what they want. Ted said board does this to get familiar and make recommendations. It is really a list of questions, according to Ted, with references to sections of the charter.
3. FAA petition on town website. Take a look at it and sign it, please. Planes have to fly, but no environmental impact statement has been made and FAA hasn't done their due diligence. Bob Duff and Andrew McDonald are proposing a resolution in the state senate and hope to put money behind it to help the fight.
4. Dog Park. Goal: find an acre that can be used without bother people and that won't cost taxpayers money to set up, but will be created through donors.

5. Unfunded Mandates. The Consortium of Ct Municipalities – a fiscally conservative group wanted the BOS to pass a resolution against unfunded mandates. Ted voted against it. He was concerned about labor and their health care benefits. We are a fortunate town and while unfunded mandates put a burden on the town, a blanket statement isn't useful. Either way, we pay either the state or locally, so might as well be locally.

Nominating Committee

Recommendation for the opening on SWRPA.

Jon Baronowski had to step down due to time commitments. Toni Lee, on behalf of the nominating committee, nominates **Amy Harris**. Amy has lived in Wilton for 20 years, has knowledge about Wilton past & present and can represent the town with Al Alper who is the Republican Counterpart. Moved & seconded. Unanimously carries.

8:15pm – GUEST SPEAKER First Selectman Bill Brennan

He endorses the need for a qualified person for SWRPA because other towns can gang up on us and we need someone who understands what our town needs. Some of the trouble are lines quietly added into a transportation plan and can debate it effectively.

Widening of Rt 7

Project is a little ahead of schedule because of favorable weather. There are 2 bridges to complete – over station and over river.

The project manager and DOT have helped solved problems as they arise. For example, at the Common Fund entrance they got the traffic light installed.

In the Spring there will bring another community information session.

Landscaping plans for Rte 7 are available and they will be brought down again for the information session.

Once the road is finished – traffic flow will improve tremendously, but it will not be over for another year and a half.

FAA opposition to redesign

Thanks to the DTC for sending a letter registering their formal opposition to this plan.

This plan could potentially affect our quality of life. 12 communities have put together funds to fight this. We need grassroots activity and good attorneys. Bring to bear the churches, Kiwanis, etc. in town. Good cooperation from Chris Dodd, Chris Shays. Joe Lieberman is a problem – he is cozy with the FAA. Ted wrote a letter to Sen. Lieberman, who responded with a lot of misinformation that seemed like a clone FAA response. We need to convince Joe Lieberman that he hasn't gotten personally involved in this and he should.

Jet Blue and Trans Am approach into White Plains at 4000 feet and this is why they are over us at lower altitudes. Given these additional flights, the FAA plan, which hasn't been implemented, will only exacerbate this problem even more. This is a bipartisan effort. We are taking on the US Government, with 11 lawsuits filed by CT, PA, NJ and NYS. It is a record. They have hired top-level legal counsel. The GAO is studying this

redesign plan. If that report is scathing, it will be a strong argument to send FAA back and follow due process. They have also violated the curfew.

Bob Morgan says he read that Jet Blue has increased its traffic at White Plains by 300% in the past year.

Town Plan of Conservation and Development

Planametrics is helping develop the plan. Please participate.

Bill Brennan is going to Newington for DOT to see how we can get the Metro North RR to improve this line up into Danbury. Signalization is going in and a study before material increases. There will be a lot of time before changes are implemented.

Regarding the fact that Wilton Station has been closed for a long time, Bill states that they are trying to get funds from Hartford to clean and paint Wilton Station so it can function as it should. Cannondale station is finally getting a bathroom, but it will be in a separate building.

Comstock Community Center & Senior Center Plan

The Comstock Steering Committee is chaired by David Stern, with an architect and builder on the committee. Malcolm White, Bruce Hampson on energy, Judy Zucker, Steve Pierce are also on the committee. They have a statement of requirements which is going to the Council on Public Facilities. This statement of requirements is part of a sequenced process for approving a capital projects. A small committee wrote the capital process – how to go from concept to finished project.

First step is, "What do you want to build? What functions and needs will it serve?"

Basic requirements has been listed.

The Council on Public Facilities reviews it and submits it to the Board of Selectman.

Second Step – the steering committee puts together a budget, schematics. Turner Building helps put accurate projections together. Other projects have demonstrated the need professional guidance on these matters early.

There are thoughts of knocking the whole building down, even the 12 year old west wing might be hard to incorporate into a new structure. If you want a copy of the capital process, call the First Selectman's office.

GOAL: Get this to the town meeting for a vote by May 2009.

Charter Review Commission

Last night BOS voted to appoint a CRC. They have 30 days to appoint. BOS members are going through the charter page by page. It was Richard Creeth's idea to do this and to have one member lead the discussion on each part of the Charter. Since charter review does not occur often, Bill believes it is important to be thorough. This year clarification and simplification are important matters. Term limits, Town Managers are big issues; but the BOS has raised minor issues in this process or never thought of before, such as the issue of what happens when the First Selectman becomes incapacitated.

Questions

Budget

Bob Morgan asks about energy costs and how it is affecting the budget. Bill Brennan says that we negotiate our fuel contracts in cooperation with other towns, but the whole level has gone up. There is no alternative. But we did take strong action this year to put an Energy Commission together to analyze energy options in new constructions & transportation.

Comstock

Kathleen Warner asks about the Comstock project. The Steering Committee meetings have been few and far between. It is hard to get much done when you have a committee that cancels meeting after meeting and it loses momentum. Bill states that he has pushed for the project to move faster. Part of the problem is that this involves volunteers and there is only so much time you can demand from them. There is a good committee and they were looking at many side projects (ice rink, pool) and at their costs and the need. The committee is still considering an indoor field because they determined that it is an incremental revenue producer.

Herman Telyan asks whether the field will delay the Senior Center? The indoor field would be put up separately and, according to Bruce Hampson, and is not an integral part of the project.

Herman Telyan asks that this be considered in terms of the new town plan and making it part of the community. Bill states that this area is almost the center of town.

John Kalamarides asks about finding a donor to pay for a top notch senior center. Someone in Wilton might want to endow a senior center.

Bill responds that because the town has already contributed to the funding, it isn't time to ask for grants, yet, but will be submitting applications for state and federal grants. We have to see how private donations might fit into this.

Lois asks if people are thinking of something like the Westport Senior Center (funded by a private donor). Bill says the senior center would be 7500-8000 sq. feet. Bruce adds that the whole community center would be 42000 sq. ft. The Westport Senior Center is between 10000-12000 sq ft.

Traffic

Lois asks who makes the decisions about traffic lights on Rte 7? The State of Connecticut does and primarily they get suggestions from the police department. The objective is to move traffic down the road and keep a steady flow. Traffic lights will be computer controlled and will be connected. Bill is convinced that when this is done we will have a good traffic flow.

General/Charter Commission

Deb states that she is glad he is supporting for the FAA, that it has taken too long for the Senior Center to move forward since it was a campaign issue the first time he ran over two years ago, and that the charter commission has taken a while to create, but she is glad they voted to appoint the commission and that the 30 days for appointing the committee are ticking. Bill responds that you have to have a time line and the BOS has to go through everything and have a plan and submit a charge. Deb states that the BOS is fulfilling the charge of the commission. Bill states that the commission must formally respond to the charge of the Board of Selectmen.

Kathleen asks about how many people will be on the Charter Commission. Bill says 7 to 9. The BOS will decide whether they will appoint the chair, as they have with other commission, such as the Energy Commission. The single most important element of every committee is to have a capable chair.

CERT Communications issues

Deb asks about the communications difficulty CERT is having and emergency preparedness. They had 18 radios that didn't work and now 6 of them are working. Deb is concerned that we are sending citizens out without radio communications (they are using their cell phones). CERT people are wonderful to volunteer. Bill hasn't heard anything, but will look into it.

9:23 Regular meeting resumes

Campaign Committee

Kathleen Warner gives the report.

There is a meet and greet event for Jim Himes, candidate for Congress, in New Haven from 5:30-7:30 on Friday.

John Kalamarides hosted a coffee for Jim. Kathleen has more in the works. Kathleen would love to reach out beyond the DTC – Jim needs to meet our friends, Dems, Rs and Us. Give names of those who want change and want to talk about what they want to see in Washington.

John Hartwell is having a New Canaan fundraiser Sunday from 4-6pm. Art has volunteered to be his contact person here in Wilton. The Campaign Committee will meet with him Monday. Toni said that John Hartwell was at the Planning & Zoning meeting last night. John knows it is about the Unaffiliateds.

Meet and Greets are so important in Wilton for people to get to know Jim Himes and John Hartwell.

JJB, April 28th, Joe Biden is the speaker. Tickets are \$175.

Thomas Dec – on March 19 Jim Himes will speak at the High School at 5:30pm. David Burnstein **1808** on why kids should vote is suggested by Kathleen as another good speaker.

Website Report

Margaret DeRose states that she looked at other options for hosting, which are not high quality, so the shell of what is going up is in Richard's hands and going up in 1 week. She needs content so please send it to her.

DTC Fundraiser Saturday, May 3, Breakfast

April 5 is fundraiser for John Hartwell and 143rd candidate.

Trackside is reserved for May 3 -- \$150 for 2 hours.

Marianne Wilson will cater and we will have the basic breakfast.

Sen. Dodd won't know whether he will be able to come. Jim Himes can come, John Hartwell will come, 143rd Candidate, Kim Fawcett will come and talk. Susan Byciewicz will come also. We will ask Dan Malloy.

We will focus on getting students there and work with Thomas to do this.

After motion and second, the fundraiser for May 3rd unanimously approved.

Sharon moves for \$30 ticket and under 18 is \$5. Second. Unanimously carries.

Deb moves that the Finance committee be allowed to expend money in support of this fundraiser. Second. Unanimously Carries.

Sharon states that at the next DTC meeting tickets will be distributed.

Toni suggests we reach out to new Dems by phone or letter.

Letter to the editor should be written to invite people.

Deb suggests that our information sheet include a list of dignitaries who will attend the fundraiser.

Bruce Hampson states that there is no meeting tomorrow on Comstock because everything was completed at Monday's meeting. Expecting to be before the Commission on Public Facilities on March 13.

Motion to Adjourn 9:47.

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Grace
Secretary

Approved April 1, 2008
By the Wilton DTC