

Wilton Democratic Town Committee
MINUTES
January 5, 2010, Town Hall Room B, 7:30pm

PRESENT: Alysia Benzinger, Paul Burnham, Ted Hoffstatter, Ernie Ricco, Carole Ball, Carole Kleinfeld, Tom Burgess, Charlie Lewis, John Kalamarides (Chair), Sharon Grace, Dan Troph, Richard Creeth, Bob Morgan, David Borglum, Fred Herot, Art Shulman,
GUESTS: Peggy Reeves, Merrick Alper, Carole Young-Kleinfeld

7:53pm : John Kalamarides calls the meeting to order.

DECEMBER MINUTES WILL BE REVISED AND APPROVED NEXT MONTH.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Paul Burnham states all nominees have been accepted by the Board of Selectmen, including new nominations. There is some question over whether David Waters can continue to serve or not – whether can be appointed to third term on council on public facilities. We have a resignation from Daniel Darst as an alternate on Board of Appeals. The Nominating Committee will have a meeting on 26th or 27th to consider candidates.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Art Shulman makes the report. For the recently ended campaign we spent a gross amount of \$9166 the net amount was \$6799; the differential being what Chris Stroup was responsible for. We have \$839, now have \$1179, after donations tonight.

We will have some bills coming in from legal notice for the caucus, and also some for the Old Town Tall from the swearing-in of newly elected officials.

Art moves to pay bills from swearing in ceremony, second, unanimously carries.

FAT CAT PARTY

Motion to give \$50 for a Fat Cat party on 1/31. Deb moves, second, unanimously carries.

ADVISORS

As you know from all the emails, John says, we have had 4 members who decided not to continue for the next 4 years. These folks have said John, I can't work at this anymore. Eric Fanwick is stating a new business, Bob Morgan, put together a committee for people who have been active, come to meetings, maybe work on campaigns, and to do that and be recognized. Called an Advisors committee: Lois Alcosser, Alice Ayers, Eric Fanwick, John Gardiner, Bob Morgan.

At the same time, bylaws chair, Charlie Lewis says we do not need to change bylaws. We will elect Advisory Board when we elect DTC members.

Motion to establish Advisory Committee by Deb; second by Art. Discussion. Bob Morgan says to a degree it adds continuity to the DTC and may offer insight.

Discussion. It is an ad hoc committee according to Charlie Lewis.

Carol Ball would like to see recognition and commendation for advisors.

Motion unanimously carries to create an advisory committee.

Lois Alcosser, Alice Ayers, Eric Fanwick, Bob Morgan, John Gardiner elected unanimously as advisors.

State Representative Peggy Reeves addresses the committee

On Dec. 21, the legislature was called into session to vote on 2 packages of deficit mitigation. Probably \$400-600 million in deficit. The legislature passed 2 packages which the governor vetoed; Peggy voted for budget and against revenue package because the revenue package brought the threshold for the estate tax back down to \$2 million – where it was before the budget was passed in August. So there Estate Tax cliff was protected, but she spoke to the caucus to tell them that there needs to be finality for tax advisors and that \$3.5 million was the right threshold.

Peggy is concerned not only with finding sensible solutions to the budget, but also campaign finance reform because nothing has been done to address the court decision on the Citizens Election Program. If 2d circuit comes back with decision against us then may have to go back to old system. The State Senate does not seem interested in the Citizens Election Law.

Selectman's Report

TAX RELIEF

Richard Creeth addresses elderly and disabled tax relief. At last night's meeting basically the BOS supported the majority of the recommendations with cap of \$850,000 on credit and deferral. The committee recommended lowering interest to 0% and the Board of Selectmen did not agree. They agreed to increase the income bans from the credits, increasing the credits and changing the credit to a curve, rather than a cliff. The meeting started with Bill and Hal taking positions that we could not take a penny more.

Ted Hoffstatter says that Elderly Tax relief is important so people don't have to leave Wilton after they have raised their children. He is pleased they got something done on the issue.

Deb asks – if it hits the cap, then how draw the line? Richard says you don't – you pro rate more at the high income. Final Vote –meeting with Board of Finance. Sharon says that Richard and Ted took a stand to make sure there was some tax relief for the elderly at the meeting.

BUDGET

Richard says it looks terrible, hard to see how we can make it without staff reductions. Wilton cut to the bone last year on the Board of Selectman's budget – came in with a decrease. The Board of Ed came in with an increase last year. Richard says even if Board of Ed and BoS come in flat we are looking at 2.2% tax increase. That is because last year there was a surplus left over. Our revenues are below projections so far this year.

TREES

Tree Ordinance formalizes the support of trees in Wilton. Master plan of trees for Wilton – they are trying to be designated a Tree City USA and in order to do it, must pass ordinance, but formalizes the philosophy in place.

PLASTIC BAGS

Plastic Bag ordinance public meeting on February 1.

Merrick Alper addresses the DTC.

Merrick Alper is running for the Democratic nomination for US Senator. He is from Colchester; his mother was a school teacher and held a 2d job. He attended UCONN, graduated from Trinity and Georgetown Law School. He decided a large law firm was not for him, so he left a large Hartford firm

after a year and worked on the Clinton campaign and the healthcare effort in the early 90s. He then went into the army and served in Bosnia.

Afterward he put together a small medical software company and built the company up over time. He met his wife working for the Al Gore 2000 campaign and lives in Mystic.

He has supported Chris Dodd, but had enough with the economy and AIG, loss of jobs.

On May 19, he announced that he would primary Chris Dodd.

Three reasons he is doing this:

1. Believes in private sector job creation. That is the best social welfare program in this country. Before redistribute wealth, we have to create wealth.
2. Clean Government. When you hold office you have to be accountable and stand in front of people every night and convey to people what you are doing. Merrick is asking to be an employee of the voters and will always report back to boss. If you are a Senator and no one sees you, except for fundraiser, then who is working for who.
 - a. Need publicly financed election
 - b. Term limits.
3. The course being taken in Afghanistan is the wrong course. He has experience in a Muslim nation (Bosnia). We are on the wrong course. Dodd has supported that war; and probably he will not change his mind.

Bob Morgan asks about jobs. Manufacturing has gone overseas. NYTIMES had a beautiful picture of new rail cars manufactured in Japan. 30 years ago they were manufactured in the USA. Including engineering jobs. How get jobs back?

Merrick responds that short term it is because of the absence of access to the credit markets.

Long-term we need to Long term we need to put together a first rate vocational school system; the second thing is make sure free trade is fair trade. So when China goes out to subsidize an industry, that is not fair.

Deb asks: 1. Raised in CT and live in CT now, how long in CT and what committees are you interested in serving in now: in college and then since 2002 he has lived in CT.

2. He would choose commerce for job creation. If he is elected senator he will come back each week and report to the voters.

Richard asks if he has held elected position. Merrick says no. Richard mentions that he came to the Board of Selectman as an experienced businessman and found that it took time to understand how municipalities work, that they are different than corporations. It was an adjustment; politics and business are different. A career in business is an asset but does not qualify you and it is ambitious to aim for the U.S. Senate according to Richard.

Merrick says if percolating up through serving in public office is the only way, then maybe that is why we are in the trouble we are in.

Carole Young-Kleinfeld asks for his position on Health care Reform: He answers that in 1993 35 million people needed insurance and now 47 need it. He thinks the discussion now is about new insurance products. He believes in a meaningful public option and would not vote for the current Senate Bill.

Art Shulman points out that if Merrick voted against it, it would fail. We would lose and you worked 16 years ago, which is why we need to fight for the bill now.

Sharon Grace asks about what he would do in the Afghan War.

Merrick thinks we need to isolate the threat and go back to the original operation when we first went into Afghanistan: Operation Jawbreaker. We did it with 15,000 members of the northern alliance, and covert means and air power. Need to use covert means; no heavy US foot print.

In Afghanistan, they view us as infidels.

We are not there for evil means; but they don't see it that way – they see us in the latest in a long line of invaders. Use special operations. A counter insurgency requires 568,000 soldiers on the ground, and we'll have 140,000 NATO troops.

How can we support Karzai; how do we stand up to his government and deal with Pakistan who is arming and supplying the very people who launch attacks.

The thing to do is to stand up and admit we need to get out and not deeper in.

Sharon points out that President Obama's plan is not just to hammer the Taliban, but to work with locals and secure important areas and roads so Afghans can have lives, institutions can grow, schools can be built, government and local tribes can learn to work together. And a recent poll stated that the majority of Afghans did not think the Americans were invaders.

Ernie Loser makes a comment and suggests being in politics is a profession, and in order to be effective you have to be effective in that environment. There is a reason why when you join the Navy, you do not get a ship right at the beginning. You have to use your skills and to do that you have to understand how you can be effective.

John Kalamarides announces

Congressman Jim Himes just came back from Afghanistan and is having several town hall opportunities:

Jan 6th at Pequot Library at 7

Trumbull on the 9th

Also talking about the consumer protection agency

On the 8th at the Black Rock Library on Fairfield Ave. in Bridgeport

Speak Up Wilton, January 23, 9-11am.

Campaign Committee meets Tuesday at 6:30.

Motion to Adjourn, second, unanimously carries.

Adjourned 9:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Grace

Approved February 2, 2010