

MINUTES

Wilton Democratic Town Committee
July 5, 2011, Wilton Town Hall

PRESENT

Members: Carol Ball, Tom Burgess, Paul Burnham, Tom Dec, Kelly Franklin, Ted Hoffstatter, John Kalamarides, Charlie Lewis, Art Shulman, Dan Troph

Advisors: Walter Briggs

Guests: Mark Bradley (Norwalk DTC chair; William Tong supporter), Albert Devita, Ron Kashden, Shannon Marietta (communications director William Tong campaign), Andrew McNee, Valerie Rosenson, Carole Young-Kleinfeld, William Tong (candidate for Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate), Michael Tartell, Ross Tartell, Molly Young (Obama for America), Brian Lilly

MEETING OPENED

At 7:38 p.m., Chair John Kalamarides called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Motion to approve the minutes from the June meeting, made and seconded; unanimously carried.

CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Volunteer of Month** – David Borglum, coach of softball team. Unfortunately, the Democrats did not win this year (final score 13 to 8); but had fun!.
- **New WDTC members.** **Brian Lilly** and **Valerie Rosenson** were nominated to be members of DTC. Brian was previously a member of DTC, attends our fundraisers and events, and is looking forward to serving again. Valerie is employed by the city of Stamford; she, as well as her husband and son, have a long record of volunteering on behalf of Democrats. Both candidates nominated by Carol Ball, seconded by Art Shulman. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Fall Municipal Slate.** A special meeting of the DTC will be required prior to caucus to approve the slate. Caucus is Tuesday the 19th at 8:00 at Town Hall. After some discussion on dates, it was decided that the special meeting will be held just before the caucus (at 7:00 p.m. on July 19th at Town Hall).
- **Presidential Speech.** John Kalamarides reported that he, Westport DTC Chair Jim Ezzes, Weston DTC Chair Barbara Reynolds saw President Obama speak 10 days ago. The President spoke for 15 minutes, and it was “the old Barack”. He spoke from the heart, about the public option and other progressive priorities. He said he knew they (progressive Democrats) were disappointed, and he was disappointed himself. But he talked about Don't Ask Don't Tell, Lilly Ledebetter,

saving the U.S. auto industry, and the American Recovery and Reinvestment act. John was inspired.

- **Debt Ceiling.** John was at an event with Congresswomen Rosa DeLauro and Congressman Jim Himes a few weeks ago. John asked how they are going to get by the debt ceiling issue. Our delegates said that the GOP freshman have no sense of history, and their politics are pure ideology, disconnected from reality. The debt limit is largely driven by policies of the Bush administration and his Republican-led congress. It relates to paying for already-incurred expenses, not authorizing new ones. And it MUST be raised or the consequences to the U.S. and world financial markets and average Americans will be catastrophic (interest rates rising, investments losing value, social security, service people, Medicare not being paid). John encouraging letters to the editor.

TREASURER'S REPORT

- **Art Shulman** reported that everything's fine. No change since prior meeting. Good shape. Quarterly report being turned in.

GUEST SPEAKERS

- **William Tong - Candidate for Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate.** Tong is currently a State Representative (in his third term), representing New Canaan and parts of Stamford. He is the first Democrat to hold that seat and first Asian American to serve at state level. In the Assembly, he Chairs the Banks committee and is a member of energy and judiciary committees.
 - He is running because stakes are high, and we must hold this seat. The Democratic map for 2012 in Senate is challenging, and holding the Senate is key given the intransigence of Republicans. Need to get our confidence back as a nation. Tong described his background. His parents are first generation immigrants, who worked as a cook and waitress in Chinese restaurant. William and his four sisters worked there after school. His family is grateful for opportunity they had to work hard for the American dream, and William is concerned that for the first time in his life, people are losing faith in that dream. He knows from first-hand experience it is still possible, and wants to make sure it is a fair fight. He is willing to make hard decisions in Washington to get the economy moving again, and get community banks to start lending again. Small banks not same as large banks – need to get regulation right. As head of the Banking committee, Tong has also been exposed to foreclosures. CT has mediation model; 65% stay in homes – that could, and should be a national model. Jobs. Gasoline prices (zone pricing in Fairfield county) makes prices 50 cents a gallon higher here. Wants investigation on gasoline speculation. Federal funds could be used to create municipal loan programs for energy efficiency improvements. Iraq / Afghanistan; stopped being a fair fight a long time ago. Too many troops have done too many rotations. We have to be more judicious in the

way we deploy our military resources. Other candidates; both capable. Tong says what distinguishes him, since he is not a household name, not a congressman, and not a millionaire is that he has had to fight for most things in his life, and people can tell the difference. We need a strong Democrat with a compelling personal story who can raise resources and stand toe to toe with Linda McMahon or whomever the Republicans nominate.

Questions

- **Carol Ball** asked about **zone gas prices**. Tong said problem with Federal anti-trust law. Big oil has exploited loopholes. Statute can change that (case law is the basis of their pricing; statute trumps).
- **Art Shulman** asked about **electoral viability** versus better known contenders. Tong raised 500K; substantial number, shows viability). Top campaign staff. Best story. Lots of support outside Fairfield County (lots of DTC chairs). Race is statewide; won't be won or lost in the 4th. We've believed in Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, Dan Malloy, Jim Himes; all were underdogs at one point. Team, message, resources.
- **Kelly Franklin** asked about **Joe Lieberman** connection. Tong volunteered for Lieberman when was 15; in addition to answering phones, door-knocking etc., his biggest memory from that teenage volunteer phase was that he (Tong) photocopied face on the Senator's copy machine. At the time, Senator Lieberman was well-regarded by both parties, and a solid Democrat. These days, while Tong is respectful of the Senator's service, he strongly disagrees with some of the stances he's taken. Tong was particularly hurt when he endorsed John McCain over Barack Obama (who was Tong's law professor). Tong was first CT elected official to endorse Obama.
- **Carol Young-Kleinfeld** asked about **TV advertising**. Linda McMahon spent a lot in NY market to reach Fairfield county. Very expense. Tong sees it as an advantage. Because he is from Stamford, he has more name recognition in Fairfield county than say Chris Murphy.
- **Tom Burgess** asked for clarification on **Afghanistan**. Tong wants to bring troops home as quickly and safely as possible. While he thinks President Obama's plan a good one; if we can accelerate that draw down that would be good. Doesn't want to see Afghanistan turn back into a haven for terrorists. Need to do more on diplomatic and political side.
- **Carol Ball** asked about a national **DREAM act**. Tong spoke about CT passing state-wide DREAM act in 2011; helps a couple of hundred kids attend UConn.

Tong asked to speak on that issue; his father was nearly deported before Tong was born (came over on tourist visa). INS agent said he'd overstayed and had to leave. Father wrote 6-page letter to President Nixon. Begged for a chance to stay, grow his small business, and pursue the American Dream. Attorney General wrote back and encouraged him to pursue citizenship through normal course (back of line). He did, and William Tong was born an American. Hopes to tell that story on floor of U.S. Senate.

- **Molly Young - Obama for America.** Looking to get people engaged for 2012, Molly passed around a sign-up sheet to collect names and numbers of those willing to volunteer. She also distributed a 2-page summary of Promises Kept by the Obama administration.
 - Carol Young-Kleinfeld asked Obama for America keep Democratic Registrars in the loop on their campaigns to sign-up new voters.

CAMPAIGN TRAINING

- **Tom Dec, Carol Ball, and John Kalamarides** attended a State Central campaign training session.
 - Tom got access to the CT VAN (Voter Activation Network) system and put together a slideshow of the 2011 outlook, by the numbers. In last 3 municipal election years, 47-50% of voters GOP, and 20-24% independent, and 28-30% Democrat. In non-municipal, GOP 39-43% GOP, 27-33% Independent, 27-30% Dem. In municipal years, Republican's outperforming their registration by 11%; Dems 2%; unaffiliated underperforming by 14%. Makes sense in that those with strongest party ID more likely to vote. Tom laid out various 2011 scenarios.
 - Carol's interest was on the PR and platform side of it, and found the guidance on developing messaging and communications strategies very interesting.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

- Committee Chair **Paul Burnham** said the committee was interviewing municipal candidates and meeting later this week.

PLATFORM COMMITTEE

- Committee Chair **Ernie Ricco** said the platform as approved at the last meeting will be submitted to the caucus.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

- Filling in for Barbara Massey-Bear, **John Kalamarides** reported that the **Fall BBQ is schedule for** September 10th, and Barbara will distribute tickets to sell soon. The **Chairman's fund-raising letter** will go out in early August (after we settle on slate).

SELECTMAN'S REPORT

- On behalf of Ted Hoffstatter, John Kalamarides updated that attendees on the **Yankee Gas** project as well as Ted's efforts to get measurable goals on the **reusable bags** initiative. 2000 bags went out in one week in May, and Go Green gets audit in July from Stop-and-Shop and Village Market.

STATE CENTRAL REPORT

- **Ted Reported** that John and other DTC chairs meeting with the Governor in several batches this summer. Starting to get nice mix of attendees at State Central Meetings. PR person is very good.

ADJOURNMENT

- Motion to adjourn made and seconded. Adjournment at 9:14 p.m.