

## **Josephine County Democrats**

Regular meeting July 14, 2020

By ZOOM

The meeting began at 6:52 p.m. after a short social. A quorum was present including Chair Brian Clark, Vice-Chair Lynda Spangler, Treasurer Dorothy Yetter (Zoom host), Secretary Lynda Demsher, and various caucus and committee chairs.

### **Action:**

- The agenda was accepted and minutes approved.
- Amanda Thorpe, running for Josephine County Circuit Judge was endorsed unanimously as was Vanessa Ogier, running for a seat on the Grants Pass City Council.
- Also approved was access to our VAN account for Amanda and Vanessa.
- Kathy Svendsen was approved to be a member of the Election Committee to help coordinate those wishing to run for office in the party.

### **Treasurer's Report:**

Dorothy reported people are continuing to support us with donations and we've done a brisk sale of Biden signs. We took in \$820.00 last month, bringing our bank account up to \$8,861. We're ready to start spending on our "Get Out The Vote" campaign to make sure Democrats get out and support our candidates. Dorothy also reported we got a donation of a stack of anti-Trump hats that will be for sale at the office. The donor said to sell them and give the money to the Biden campaign. She also reminded everyone we are still doing our 50/50 drawings, but now online through the website [josephinedemocrats.org](http://josephinedemocrats.org). The winner gets half the take plus a nice bottle of wine.

### **Reports:**

Brian said the opposition has yet another Kate Brown recall effort and said we need to submit some letters to the Daily Courier editor commending Brown for her efforts to keep COVID-19 under control. He also thanked the Geri Ventura and her team for their outreach to the Grants Pass Chief of Police and said the DPO Chair saw his email with the link to the story about them on KOB15 and congratulated them and our organization.

Brian said the trash pickup went well along Redwood Highway, with several volunteers filling 20 bags with trash. This was the first trash pickup since the shutdown, so things piled up.

Events Chair Sheri Morin, through Brian because she couldn't get into Zoom, reported we will have an ad on the fairground's reader-board the last two weeks before the election reminding people to vote and support our candidates. We will pay for this with an election grant from DPO. She is currently working on wording for the message. Brian said part of that grant will also go toward getting a new sign for the office that is lower on the building.

## **Caucus Reports:**

The Environmental and Health caucuses have on-going projects. Jean Mount reported work on opposing a timber sale in the Williams area and developing questions for the Public Health Director regarding testing and where to get one and if we have adequate contact tracing here. Lynda Spangler is part of a listening group trying to find out how the state is implementing the Governor's carbon reduction plan. Lynda Demsher reported on progress forming a Gun Owners Caucus. Teresa Vonmeiker said she is interested in joining.

Lynda S said she continues to work on providing forums for our candidates online. Kevin Marr suggested we get a third-party group such as the League of Women Voters to sponsor one and help publicize it for us to possibly get more participation. Dorothy pointed out our forums are live on Facebook and are recorded for people to watch later if they can't make the real-time meeting.

## **Speakers:**

**Amanda Thorpe** provided a brief introduction and reasons for running for circuit court judge. She has been practicing law in Grants Pass since 2006 with a law firm here where she is a general practitioner handling civil cases, family law, construction liens and a variety of other cases. She also volunteers in the community as a family law advocate. She's running because she believes people's cases should be heard on their own merit and not be included in a formulaic approach to because even a traffic ticket could have an impact on a person's employment and life.

**Vanessa Ogier**, who is running in Ward 4, is so far unopposed but the filing deadline is in late August so that could change. She said she has watched the Grants Pass City Council and doesn't feel they are moving forward on some very important issues here, such as housing, the climate, and fiscal responsibility so she decided to run herself. Councilmembers wield a lot of power here, with a \$145 million budget to oversee, but she hasn't seen that power used as effectively as it should be to solve city problems.

**Shemia Fagan**, Secretary of State candidate also introduced herself to us and said she grew up in the Dalles so knows what it's like to live in a small town. Her dad was a single parent, she said, because her mother was a homeless drug addict in Portland who kept a box with letters from her children in it as her only possession. Shemia, a civil rights attorney, has been in the state legislature as a member of the House and now the Senate. She said she's running for Secretary of State because she wants to make sure every voice is heard in Oregon. This year, election misinformation will be a real concern and she wants to make sure people maintain faith in elections.

She said Oregon has been innovative with mail-in voting and automatic registration through the Department of Motor Vehicles, but we are already seeing efforts to push back on voting access in our state. The next Secretary of State will face challenges unlike anything we've seen and she wants to make sure Democracy prevails. She said there is still work to be done to make sure people in very rural areas have the same access to voting. In the Senate she worked to get

prepaid postage on ballots so lack of a stamp wouldn't result in someone not being able to vote. She said she wants to do something about making sure last-minute voters' ballots count. In Oregon ballots must be in on voting day, not postmarked voting day. In cities it's usually the case that if a ballot is mailed on the same day as the election it's likely to get to the county clerk's office in time. But out in rural areas voters don't have that same benefit so she would like to see that made equitable. Shemia was asked what we can do about all the voters who remain non-affiliated, never registering for a party after becoming automatically registered. Shemia said she has done a series of short videos showing how to participate in government at the state level, and would like to see something like that to show newly registered voters how easy it is to go online to pick a party. As Secretary of State she won't be able to tell people which party to pick, but she can help people with the process and with finding out that they could be left out of crucial primary votes if they aren't registered with a party. Answering questions, she also said if felons have served their time, they should be able to vote and the homeless should be given every opportunity to participate in elections. Sometimes those with the most needs from their government have the hardest time voting, she said.

She said she's also open to lowering the voting age. We aren't judged as voters by our behavior, they shouldn't either, she said. There are a lot of issues now that will affect young people and she agrees with those who say they should have a say in their future.

Shemia was also asked what a new congressional district might look like. She said according to Portland State University's population study the middle of the state, around Bend has had the most growth and a new district could center there. She indicated she is pretty sure we will get a sixth district after this year's census and will make sure it's borders are fairly drawn. Gerrymandering is illegal in Oregon she said. Districts are based on population.

Concerning the pandemic, Shemia said every state should be prepared to offer people safe ways to vote. This isn't likely to be our first disaster, she said. "We still have an earthquake out there waiting to happen."