

Josephine County Democrats

May 10, 2022

General Hybrid Meeting (Zoom and in person)

The April minutes were approved.

Treasurer Colette Storms reported we now have \$7500 in the bank after a bulk mailing to Democrats urging them to vote, monthly bills and the securing of a booth for the county fair.

After introductions, which included many new faces, Chair Dorothy Yetter explained what PCPs are and how to write yourself in on the ballot if you want to be one.

Speakers were Caucus Chairs who gave updates on their activities and our candidate for state District 3, Brady Keister, who is also Gun Owners Caucus Chair.

Rick Flora, in for Environmental Caucus Chair Joe Stodola, reported that members are attending the Mining and Timber Advisory Committee meetings and have been following what is happening with Whitehorse Park where a proposal to put in more RV sites will result in the removal of dozens of trees and the proposed Pipe Fork timber sales where there is a stand of Port Orford cedars that should be preserved. He said the county wants to sell the land to timber interests but there are preservation organizations interested as well.

Brady Keister said he has been working with the DPO (Democratic Party of Oregon) Gun Owners Caucus on legislation to curb gun suicides. Oregon does have a law that allows guns to be removed from the homes of people at risk but the problem is there are not enough qualified mental health care workers around to make a determination a judge can sign. It's also tough to craft a bill that addresses a problem but still satisfies the "gun nuts" involved, he said.

In addition to working on gun legislation, Brady is running against Rep. Lily Morgan, a former Josephine County Commissioner whose record is now being scrutinized by Democrats. Brady explained his main issue is Mental Health because it's been long ignored by a system that would rather build prison beds than hospital beds. Mental Health also plays a role in homelessness, he said, which is another priority. He said he's tired of hearing complaints that the homeless are being "coddled" if temporary housing is provided for them. He said the people at Foundry Village in Grants Pass hold jobs, are required to help with chores in the Village and be part of the case management there. He said the next step is setting up an urban campground like the one in Medford that is safe and managed. He says he intends to also highlight just who our incumbent Representative is and what she's done the last two years in these areas. Who she is and what she does will be on the ballot, he said.

It was noted by a member of the Zoom audience that a legislator's record can be found on the website "Ballotpedia" and Morgan's reveals she is a "solid Trumper."

The Health Care caucus was represented by Kerry Michaels who said she is participating in Healthcare for All Oregon, a statewide organization and the local branches in Josephine and Jackson counties have consolidated. This group tracks bills related to health care and is working

on an Oregon Constitutional amendment that declares health care is a right for all citizens in Oregon. She said Rep. Lily Morgan has not been helpful with this.

Campaign Committee Chair Lynda Spangler said her group has been very busy this primary season organizing appearances of candidates. In February Tina Kotek spoke to Josephine Democrats and last month Tobias Read did – both by Zoom. Candidate Patrick Starnes also made an appearance in person. In addition, her group organized a county commissioner candidates' forum, and helped with \$5,000 letters to Democrats in Josephine County, reminding them of the importance of this election. Four hundred additional mailers will be sent to Democrats who didn't vote in the last primary election. This will be a test of the effectiveness of our mailing if more of these voters vote this time.

Libby Watts, Neighborhood Leader coordinator, reported that turfs have been sent out and Leaders are busy contacting registered Democrats, reminding them to vote. Turfs differ this year because of redistricting she said.

After the updates, Dorothy led a discussion about various issues and what Democrats can do about them. Prominent during the discussion was the recent Supreme Court leak that revealed five justices poised to strike down Roe vs Wade. This riled up those present who discussed the outrage and possible ways to fight back. Locally it was agreed that Democrats need to be more vocal, show up at public meetings of elected officials where “pro-life” ordinances are signed, support Planned Parenthood, keep up a constant stream of letters to the editor, and attend gatherings of public support such as the Bans OFF Our Bodies rally scheduled for Saturday. It was mentioned that the website ProChoiceOregon.org lists candidates' positions on abortion.

How do we get louder? How do we invigorate young people to join us? How do we compete with right-wing parents and churches who are teaching their kids Democrats are evil? This discussion brought up several ideas and inspired John Savens, Maya Carnegie and Patricia Eaton, all new people, to form an ad hoc committee to study ways of reaching out. Ideas brought up at this meeting included finding a place where young people can meet, organizing a progressive social media meeting for young people, supporting LGBTQ students in our schools, handing out flyers and signing people up at rallies and making contacts at the community college who can then reach out and address issues particular to young people such as climate change and abortion.