

Groton Democratic Town Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 25, 2023

7:00 -8:00 p.m. at Thrive 55+, 102 Newtown Road, Groton, CT 06340

Meeting Called to Order: 7:05 p.m. by Vice Chair Natalie Billing

Members Present: Joe de la Cruz, Adam Puccino, Roscoe Merritt, Meredith Key, Symba Ebbin, Juliette Parker, Betsy Moukawsher, Keith Hedrick, Bev Washington, Doris Pulaski, Aundre Bumgardner, Edward Jacome, R. Paul Norris, Michael Kane, Conrad Heede, Liz Duarte, Paul Duarte, Jill Rusk, Autumn Hanscom, Portia Bordelon, Ian Thomas, Dane Stevenson, Shawn Powers, Sue Hainline, Kristen Powers, Jamie Veasie-Williams, Richard Dixon, Anne-Marie Foster, Gary Welles, Juan Melendez, Matt Ivey, Anne Welles, Natalie Billing, Peter Roper, Barbara Tarbox, Dana Semeraro, Rachel Franco, Dan Gaiewski (via phone), Richard Semeraro, Bruce Jones, Mary von Dorster, John Wirzbicki, Bob Frink, Jim Hutson, Nancy Codeanne, David McBride, Alex Koumanelis, Mary Ellen Furlong

Guests Present: Chelsea Meade, Lisa Thomasco, Sam Santiago, Mimi Hutson, Gary Burfoot, Nick V.

Welcoming Remarks: Natalie celebrated the Democratic sweep in Nov., Rep. Conley's appointment to Screening Committee Chair and Deputy Majority Leader; welcomed guests. Jackie Massett is at Fairview if people would like to visit. Everyone wished Bev Washington a happy birthday. Would like to end meeting by 8, and adjourn to social hour, as is our custom.

Approval of Minutes: Natalie called for a motion to approve the minutes of 26-Oct-2022

Motion: Richard Dixon **Second:** Mary von Dorster

State requires minutes be posted publicly. They will be posted on GrotonDems.org web page

Vote: 45/0/3 S. Ebbin, I. Thomas, P. Bordelon abstained

Treasurer's Report John Wirzbicki presented

October beginning balance: \$11,017.91.

Contribution total \$325.00, Expenses total \$6,131.57 (HQ, postage, campaign consultant, renewal of CT Van membership) Currently have \$5,211.34 on hand. Could be outstanding utilities bills.

Approval of Treasurer's Report: N. Billing called for a motion to approve the treasurer's report

Motion: Betsy Moukawsher **Second:** Richard Dixon/Shawn Powers

Vote: All approved

Fall campaign will need approximately \$10,000 to \$20,000. Need to fundraise. Prefer to hold \$2,000 in reserve for HQ 2024/Pres. Election. Dues are \$25. Natalie requested \$50-100 from any who can afford.

Chair's Report: N. Billing

- ❖ Have vacancies in RTM districts 1 and 3
 - Mr. Matthew Brennan (D1) is interested. Let Natalie or Dan know if you know someone from D3 who might be interested.
- ❖ With Kate Rotella resigning
 - Had to do an updated SEEC form
 - State Central was informed of the change

Groton Democratic Town Committee

- VAN (voter access network) contract with State Party had to be renewed. Lots of emails/details to be resolved. Done. At a cost of approx. \$250 yr.
- GDTC liability insurance renewed. At a cost savings. Now approx.. \$350 yr.
- CHAIR position. Natalie thanked Kate for her service
- GDTC rules say “may” elect new chair. Roberts rules say Vice Chair completes the term of Chair. Natalie prefers to hold election.
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- ❖ Nominations. Natalie reviewed Roberts rules: nominations don’t require a second. May be seconded. No motion is required to close nominations. Chair declares them closed when all nominations made. Hold off on speeches until nominations close.
 - Chair opened the floor to nominations for the office of Chair, for a term ending Mar. 2024.
 - Peter Roper nominated Natalie Billing as Chair. Seconded by Bev Washington.
 - Ian Thomas nominated Joe de la Cruz. Joe de la Cruz declined the nomination.
 - Ian Thomas nominated Peter Roper. Peter Roper declined.
 - Portia Bordelon nominated Syma Ebbin. Syma Ebbin declined.
 - Ian Thomas nominated Paul Norris. Paul Norris declined.
 - Richard Dixon motioned to close the nominations. John Wirzbicki seconded. Vote: 48/0/0
 - Natalie Billing elected Chair, by acclamation.
 - Natalie Billing stated it will be an honor.
 - Peter Roper made a speech on why he nominated Natalie.
 - Chair opened the floor to nominations for the office of Vice Chair, for a term ending Mar. 2024
 - Joe de la Cruz nominated Dan Gaiewski. Seconded by Eddie Jacome and Bev Washington
 - Natalie mentioned that Dan is on the phone (as he is at college, completing degree in Political Science)
 - There being no other nominations, Natalie declared nominations closed.
 - Natalie declared Dan Gaiewski elected Vice Chair, by acclamation.
 - Joe de la Cruz gave speech on his reason why he nominated Dan Gaiewski.
 - Natalie excited to be working with Dan, will be a dynamic team, combining experience and youth.

Nominations Committee Report presented by D. Gaiewski

- ❖ Jenna Lowenstein, GDTC member D7 recommended unanimously by Nom Comm for Library Board
 - Motion: John Wirzbicki, Seconded by Bev Washington - all in favor 48/0/0
 - N. Billing had resume available for everyone’s review and highlighted her campaign experience with Cory Booker, Hilary Clinton, and Chris Murphy. She is a tremendous asset to GDTC.
- ❖ Nominating Committee: will be meeting regularly
 - Per Chair, currently have five members who will continue
 - Others who may be interested in joining let the Chair and Vice Chair know
 - Need to recruit over 60 candidates
 - Incumbents: Sign up if you are interested in running again. New people: sign up.
 - RTM will have four additional seats in District 4. Three can be Dem.
 - City election will be in November also, for the first time.
 - Finding candidates, fundraising may be a challenge
 - City and Town committees will work together

If you speak with someone who is interested in getting involved, being a candidate, share their contact information with Natalie, Dan or Nom Comm.

Legislative Report

Groton Democratic Town Committee

- ❖ Aundre Bumgardner
 - Thanked everyone for volunteering during the election in Nov.
 - He's on the following committees: Finance, Planning & Development, Environmental, Housing & Zoning
 - Meeting in person, still have hybrid
 - Current secretary of the Black & Puerto Rican Caucus, 38 members - has 3 vacancies
 - Asked that everyone please keep Rep. Quentin "Q" Williams' family in prayers. There will be a special election.
 - Met to discuss judges, reappointment of commissioners, collective bargaining agreement for police officers
 - In the coming weeks, will be having a Town Hall meeting with Rep. Conley and Rep. Nolan
 - R. Dixon/B. Moukawsher congratulated him on his win and marriage to Kayla
 - New bills for discussion: UCONN - increasing mental health svcs, controlling electric rates
- ❖ Mayor's Report - Juan Melendez
 - Council appropriated ARPA funds in Committee, will be finalized in February
 - Meetings are on YouTube
 - Councilor Franco mentioned Groton Long Point Bridge, being done at no cost to taxpayers
 - Councilor Bordelon mentioned the electrical for Fisher Island (GLP bridge), and mentioned Black History Month event on February 1, 2023 at 3 p.m. at the Town Hall
 - Council will be discussing a non-lapsing fund for Board of Ed, and a Stormwater Authority

Briefing

- ❖ Fundraising/Social Committee
 - Will be an appreciation dinner in the spring
 - Looking for volunteers
 - Have additional events coming
- ❖ Social Media
 - Check out webpage(grotondems.org), Facebook, TikTok
 - Need feedback on how to make them better - send to Natalie, Dan, Mary or Bruce
- ❖ Nick V. (State Central) serves the 18th district. Is here to help. Reach out with questions.
 - Congratulated Groton on victories in Nov. (his town is more red).
 - Natalie thanked him for his help. John thanked him for help with VAN.
- ❖ Looking ahead to Campaign 2023. Five months need over 60 candidates for November 7th.
 - City Committee will endorse on Wednesday, July 19, 2023
 - Town Committee will endorse on Thursday, July 20, 2023
- ❖ Upcoming meetings: 2/22/23; 3/22/23; 4/26/23; 5/24/23; 6/28/23. Fourth Wednesday of the month. Mark your calendars.
- ❖ Reminder to sign up for GDTC committees and Incumbents sign up if running again.
- ❖ Future meetings will be light with a speaker, topic, maybe short movie. Bob Frink (Groton Housing Authority) will be at next month's meeting - February.

Announcement/Questions

- ❖ Joe de la Cruz - Groton Sail Foundation is selling stones for \$250 dedicated to anyone in Town. Please like and follow Groton Sail Foundation
- ❖ Peter Roper brought in chocolate to honor Barbara Nelson
- ❖ Anne-Marie Foster would like to discuss the Town Council-Town Manager relationship

Groton Democratic Town Committee

- ❖ Richard Dixon thanked Natalie for taking on the role of Chair. Mentioned FOI (Freedom of Information) information he'd like to share and discuss. Email him at rdixonesq@gmail.com

Motion to Adjourn: N. Billing asked for a motion to adjourn

Motion: Liz Duarte

Second: Mary von Dorster

Vote: Unanimous

Adjourned at: 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Juliette Parker
GDTC Secretary

DRAFT