

# Groton Democratic Town Committee

## Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 26, 2023

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

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

**Members Present:** Joe de la Cruz, Matthew Shulman, Juliette Parker, Bev Washington, Doris Pulaski, Aundre Bumgardner, Edward Jacome, Conrad Heede, Chris Conley, Rosemary Robertson, Meredith Key, Chelsea Meade, Gary Welles, Natalie Billing, Carole McCarthy, Peter Roper, Rachel Franco, Al Fritzsche, Lisa Thomasco, Kathy Busse, Bruce Jones, Mary von Dorster, John Wirzbicki, Jim Hutson, David McBride, Alex Koumanelis, Mary Ellen Furlong

**Guests Present:** Janice Kimball, Jayne Heede, Nikki Neifeld

**Welcoming Remarks:** Natalie welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

**Approval of Minutes:** Natalie called for a motion to approve the minute of 22-Mar-2023

**Motion:** Joe de la Cruz                      **Second:** Peter Roper

P. Roper thanked Mary von Dorster for doing the minutes from last month

**Vote:** All in favor except 1 abstained

**Treasurer's Report** John Wirzbicki presented

March 22, 2023 beginning balance: \$6,120.90.

Contribution total \$225.00, Fundraiser \$300.00, Ad Book \$525.00, Expenses total \$12.20 (Anedot fees)

Currently have \$7,158.70 on hand. If you give more than \$50.00 in ads, this will be a contribution.

Approval of Treasurer's Report: Don't need motion per Roberts Rules

## Legislative Report

- ❖ Chris Conley
  - Session tomorrow; Judiciary meeting at 9 a.m.
  - Men's Husky team will be at Capitol, can watch on CTN at 3:15 p.m - 5 p.m.
  - Nominations for state jobs, many will be returning. Peter Whitescarver will be Port Authority. Workers Comp Judges, Claims Commissioner will be Bobby Shea
  - Discussed pardons and bills
  - Democrats proud of:
  - Early Voting/No excuse voting should pass
  - Energy reforms hopefully will happen
  - Housing Bills: many being proposed
  - Reproductive Rights Bill / including vending machines for condoms on college campuses
  - Budget is now out of Appropriations
  
- ❖ Aundre Bumgardner

## Groton Democratic Town Committee

- Thanked everyone who came out to their legislative forum
- Thrive55+ received a Wellness Award; “hats off to them”
- Tentatively scheduling a Town Hall Meeting in Mystic for May 28<sup>th</sup>. Please come.
- Sign up for his email blast list please
- Education Bills need to go to Appropriations
- Re Free school lunch: looking into ways of doing it for next year, funding is an issue.

### Chair’s Report: Natalie Billing

- ❖ Working with nominating committee
  - Good amount of interest in the BOE, looks like we’ll have a full slate
  - Still looking for Town Council candidates. Don’t have a full slate yet. Keep reaching out.
  - RTM - need candidates for 6 & 7; 2 & 3 may be short, if you know of anyone send names to committee.
  - Nominating Committee needs EVERY GDTC member to help recruit candidates.
  -

### Nominating Committee Report: Natalie Billing for Dan Gaiewski

- ❖ Recommendations
  - Janice Kimball for the GDTC, D1; moved by A. Bumgardner, seconded by R. Robertson - all in favor
  - Next month will recommend Nikki Neifeld for GDTC, D4. She is also interested in possibly running for BOE and RTM district 4
  - James Steffes (D) has applied for Parks & Recreation Committee. NOM COMM is recommending him. Moved N. Billing, seconded B. Washington - all in favor of recommending him to the Town Council’s Personnel and Appts. Committee.

### Fundraising Committee Report presented by Mary von Dorster

- ❖ Appreciation Dinner for Joe de la Cruz and Rita Schmidt will be Sat May 13 at Par Four from 5-7.
- ❖ Txts are \$25, will be \$30 at the door
  - Program book (ad book) is looking good. Bruce Jones is putting it together by April 30th
    - We need a “head count” of attendees, for food. Please sign up tonight!! Yes/No/Maybe will attend. Joe will bring microphone.
- ❖ Still need to raise money for election; a working goal is \$12,000. Thanks for all donations of dues, “ads”, ticket sales. Early donations are essential!!!
- ❖ Town Council- Rachel Franco
  - Money appropriated to Community Speaks Out from Opioid settlement
  - Council has acted on Budget, approving most of what the Town Manager/Supt. Requested.
  - Budget going to the RTM
    - Added second social worker for the police department
    - One staff added to Parks and Rec. Dept.
    - Approximately \$400,000 decrease
    - City Budget: wanted to add social worker, hope they would put in next year
    - Paraprofessionals for schools: was an attempt to give BOE more money to raise their compensation, but it didn’t pass. Many feel they are underpaid, deserve a “living wage”.
- ❖ BOE - B. Washington/M. Shulman
  - Negotiations - currently ongoing with paraprofessionals
  - Budget passed Council with much support

## Groton Democratic Town Committee

- Reading Program, Groton is asking State for a “waiver”. There’s much interest/concern re: reading curriculum. Will be a topic of interest for a while.
- Music programs going on. Please attend. Take advantage of them. There’s one this Friday.
- RTM Education Committee -voted to recommend the RTM approve the Ed. Budget as presented. 3 approved. 2 opposed.
- Discussed the need for engineering studies for culinary program and school athletic fields
- Mentorship: Has grown from few to 30 mentors...and climbing. The need is great. Volunteer if you can. Spread the word, volunteers needed. A renewed program. Needs community support.
  - 1 hour per week for the school year; must be at the school; Background check, required, training provided
  - Similar to Big Brother/Big Sister program
  - Appreciation Night for Mentors in May
  - Interested? Please volunteer!
- Discussed Recruitment, Hiring and Retention: goals and timelines, especially minority recruitment efforts.
- Read Across America happened. If you would like to read at any time of the year, Media Specialists would love to have you!!!

### Announcements

- ❖ THURSDAY July 20, 2023 meeting is important. Need a quorum to endorse our slate of candidates. This meeting will begin at 6 p.m.
- ❖ Invitation for the NAACP Freedom Fund Dinner - June 27, 2023
- ❖ Event May 19th for Noank Community Support Services at Branford House, UCONN Avery Point, Roaring 20’s theme. Fundraiser.
- ❖ There is a list of vacancies for Boards & Commissions - 20-25 people.
- ❖ Recovery Fest on April 28, 2023 begins at 4 p.m. at Poquonnock Plains Park
- ❖ Next meeting is WED May 24, 2023, 7 PM, Senior Center.

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

**Motion:** Richard Dixon

**Second:** Mary von Dorster

**Vote:** Unanimous

**Adjourned at:** 8:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Juliette Parker  
GDTC Secretary