

Minutes, Groton Democratic Town Committee (GDTC)

Wednesday, May 22, 2024, 7-8 pm, Thrive 55/Senior Center

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Chair Natalie Billing.

Roll call of Members: Natalie Billing, Doris Pulaski, Mary Von Dorster, John Wirzbicki, Janice Kimball, Joseph Baril, Juliette Parker, Jackie Massett, Gary Welles, Marge Gookins, Lisa Johansson, Christine Conley, Jeanne Rogers, Carole McCarthy, Rachael Franco, Paul Fox, Joanne Wayland-Doyen, Bruce Jones, Richard Dixon, Elizabeth Duarte, Paul Duarte, Aundre Baumgardner, Kayla Reasco, Ian Thomas, Al Fritzsche, Bev Washington, and Conrad Heede. There was one Guest., Anne Marie Foster.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the April Meeting: A motion was made to approve the minutes of the April Meeting by Mary Von Dorster, seconded by Bruce Jones. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Treasurer's Report by John Wirzbicki: The current balance in the treasury is \$5,412.15. QR codes are available to donate to Andrew Parrella's campaign for State Senate, and to donate to the GDTC. Biden/Harris bumper stickers are available. While we have enough funds to rent a HQ, the cost for rent and utilities will deplete our treasury. Members are asked to please make donations as they are able to build our treasury.

4. Chair Report by Natalie Billing: Chelsea and Rob Meade resigned from their elected positions because they are moving. Rob resigned from the Board of Education. Two well qualified Democrats have expressed interest in the position. Both were interviewed, and Mike Whitney's name was forwarded to the Board of Education. Mike's appointment was made official by the Board Of Education to fill the seat, leaving his District 5 RTM seat open. Chelsea Meade resigned from her RTM District 4 seat. David Goode was seated in her place. A District 5 vacancy was filled by Fran Whitney, but Mike Whitney's resignation creates another D5 vacancy on the RTM. Replacements will be sought. The District 1 RTM seat is still vacant. In District 4, there are open seats available for unaffiliated or Republicans. Volunteers are sought to text people about the District 1 vacancy. Janice Kimball volunteered to take on this project, and will work with Natalie.

A reminder: the 74th John Bailey Dinner and Fundraiser for State Democrats will be held June 29, 2024, at 5:30 p.m. in Hartford. The guest speaker will be Hakeem Jeffries. New London "Drinking Liberally" has reserved a table for ten, and ten are going to attend. Those who want to go can either go individually or can reserve a table for ten if you have a group that wants to sit together. The cost is \$220 per person. This is the main fundraiser for the year for the CT Democrats. GDTC members are encouraged to attend if possible. Early bird seats are \$180.

We are looking for a headquarters for a prospective occupancy in August. Please ask any landlord you know if they would rent to us for three and a half months.

Convention Reports: All candidates were endorsed unanimously. The conventions were successful, inspiring, and a lot of fun!

Thanks to Mary Von Dorster and Liz Duarte for helping. Many delegates were unable to go. We need to consider a different way to do this next time.

The next GDTC meeting will be held at Thrive 55, Wednesday, June 26, 2024, at 7:00 p.m

6. Nominating Committee Report: presented by co-chairs Bev Washington and Liz Duarte. Other Nominating Committee members are Carole McCarthy, Cutter Oliver, and Peter Roper. Two Democrats have applied to serve on Boards and Commissions (ABC's). Thomas Readett is interested in the Performing Arts Commission. Dan G. and Natalie both highly recommend him. Dan recruited him. The committee was impressed with his resume and recommend he be recommended for appointment. Beatrice Mills applied for the Shellfish Commission. The Nominating Committee reviewed her application and resume and feel she is highly qualified and recommend her for appointment.

A motion was made by Richard Dixon, seconded by Mary Von Dorster, to forward the names of the two Democratic applicants, for seats on two Commissions, to the Town Council. The motion passed unanimously, with Town Council members abstaining.

There are 10 Democratic slots for Justice of the Peace. John Wirzbicki made a motion to endorse the Nominating Committee's slate, seconded by Chris Conley. The motion passed unanimously. The names of the ten Justice of the Peace nominees are: Dr. Sultan Ahamed (Sully), Portia Bordelon, Nancy Codeanne, Joe de la Cruz, Richard Dixon, Dan Gaiewski, Marian Galbraith, Sharon Kugler, Lian Obrey and Barbara Tarbox.

A motion was made to endorse Jeanne Rogers as the Democratic candidate for Registrar of Voters in the November 2024 election by John Wirzbicki, seconded by Bev Washington. There were no nominations from the floor, nominations were closed, and the vote was taken. The motion passed unanimously.

6. A full Legislative update was given by Chris Conley and Aundre Baumgardner. Some highlights:

A. Early Childhood Education Centers passed. One will be located here in Groton as part of the pilot program, recognizing that Southeastern Connecticut is a childcare desert.

B. Vacant nursing homes can be used as affordable housing. Duplexes and triplexes are allowed with a change of zoning.

C. Telehealth is permanent and will be paid for by insurance.

D. ARPA -Five million allocated to support more trains on Shoreline East. Five million allocated to the Navy Base.

7. Council update was given by Mayor Rachael Franco. She spoke about the City of Groton Seawall, the futures of Groton Heights and Pleasant Valley Schoos, upcoming public hearings people could attend, and decisions about early voting sites. If anyone has input on these decisions, speak to her or any councilor.

8. The Board of Education update was given by Bev Washington. There is still uncertainty on how the Board will cover the cost of school nurses next year. Other reductions in the budget will be needed most likely to cover this. The Board is dealing with the resignations of the Business Manager and the Assistant Superintendent. Obviously, this presents administrative challenges. An interim Business Manager will be hired.

9. Fundraising Committee Report: Mary Von Dorster reported that there will be a picnic fundraiser for the GDTC at Sutton Park on June 30, 2024, from 4-6 p.m. Guests will be Andrew Parrella, our candidate for the 18th Senate District, and Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz. Please plan to attend, and bring a friend or family member! Hamburgers, sausage, hotdogs, veggie burgers, salads, iced tea, lemonade and desserts will be provided. Donation forms for Andrew Parella for State Senate will be available. All members are asked to support his campaign with donations of at least \$5, but \$15 or \$25 or more if you can. We appreciate Andrew running and need to support him now.

10. A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Paul Fox, seconded by Rachael Franco. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Doris Pulaski, Secretary, GDTC