

46th District Democrats
Minutes of the March 16, 2006 General Meeting
Olympic View School, Seattle WA

Scott White called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM. Chad Lupkes led the pledge of allegiance.

The chair reported that there were four new members and there were several new people attending the meeting. He asked those present to please renew their membership as soon as possible so these figures could be included in the first quarter report.

In other membership news, Mark Saporito, our Sergeant-at-arms, is retiring from his position. Mark was given a warm round of applause.

State Party Report: The 2006 precinct caucuses were sparsely attended in comparison to 2004 (219 vs. 7,000), probably due to the fact that they occurred on the first day of glorious sunshine after several weeks of rain. However, attendance was comparable to the mid-term "off-year" precinct caucuses of 2002.

PCO election: Janet Miller introduced two new PCO applicants. Jamie Crawford of Precinct 1286 has plans for a newsletter for her constituents. Stewart Ferguson of Precinct 2309 is looking forward to being a new PCO. They were both enthusiastically approved.

Treasurer's Report: Gail Chiarello gave the Treasurer's Report and encouraged people to join the 4600 club. The 2006 budget was reviewed. Gail commented that contributions from the precinct caucuses were very low, but the expenses of running the caucuses remained high. Scott White made a friendly amendment to reduce revenue from the precinct caucuses from \$1,800 to \$400 (reflecting the actual income of \$395), and reducing the precinct caucus rental expense from \$3,423 to \$2,023.

The decision of the Seattle School Board to charge only custodial services and HVAC for the precinct caucuses and not to charge actual space rental meant that the original budgeted item was too high. This was seconded and approved. The budget as amended was then adopted. A question was raised about printing the Demogram at a union shop. Scott explained that the February 2006 Demogram had been printed at a union shop (Service Printing), but the district didn't always have the luxury of time that a Union shop requires. Kinko's offers 24-hour turnaround.

Reports from our Olympia Legislators

Phyllis Kenney is proud to be a 46th LD Democrat. The 2006 supplemental budget is a good one. An excellent civil rights law was passed. Tim Eyman is trying to do an initiative to get rid of it. A strong sex offender law was passed. Strong education laws

were passed. The Democrats in the House and the Senate proved that Democrats govern better than the Republicans.

Jim McIntire reported two-term Republican Rep. Rodney Tom of the 48th District is quitting the Republican Party to run for the state Senate as a Democrat against Sen. Luke Esser. McIntire said that Tom has a progressive voting record; therefore, when he switched parties last week, the Dems really did pick up another seat.

Jim commented the press is saying that this is the most responsible budget ever. The Republicans were frustrated because they couldn't fight the budget. The Rossi taxes were rolled back and performance audits were ordered for Tax Preferences.

Ken Jacobsen talked about the Senate mandating bio-diesel. He suggested a constitutional amendment to abolish initiatives or putting an initiative on the ballot to restrict Eyman (not him specifically, but the types of initiatives he puts forth). He said that the City of Seattle needs to vote on the viaduct rebuild versus the tunnel. He doesn't like the state government telling the city how to run its affairs. Ken discussed the Sound Transit's relationship to the RTIDs.

Ken praised Eileen Pollet and Kerry Gutknecht, Sarajane Siegfriedt's son, as "rising stars." Both worked in his office during the past legislative session.

A question was raised regarding the Fair Share bill (companies with more than 5,000 employees would be mandated to put 9% of the amount of their payroll into healthcare). Jim McIntire responded Speaker Frank Chopp killed it. He suggested Chopp might be concerned about his own electability in the upcoming race. The Senate managed to get the primary moved from September to the third Tuesday in August.

Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney commented that if Costco can provide health insurance for all its employees, then certainly Wal-Mart could provide it.

Further discussion among our three electeds: Rodney Tom in the 48th--the Republican House member who just switched to Democrat--is running for the Senate against incumbent Luke Esser and is likely to win. Eric Oemig, a Microsoft employee and Democrat, is running against Sen. Bill Finkbeiner in the 45th. Nationally, twenty--perhaps even forty--Iraq war vets are running for Congress. Phyllis noted Yakima and the Tri-Cities area were historically Democratic and possibly are ready to come back.

Report from Nick Licata, City Council President

Nick Licata is now the President of the City Council and has also now moved into the 46th District. He is Chair of the Public Safety & Arts Committee. The committee has been responsible for bringing on board 25 new police officers in the city and are trying for 25 more. There are currently only two Community Service Officers and there needs to be more. There are also two crime prevention officers and two emergency officers. The City also wants to coordinate volunteers to fight graffiti.

The Fire Levy is 40% over budget--\$67 million short of what is needed. There are five fire stations in the 46th District alone. Upgrades are needed and will be done but the Council has asked the Mayor to suggest how this can be done with the current levy funds--where will dollars be found? Will the Mayor propose to eliminate a Fire Station or reduce the scope?

On the Municipal Court, the Community Court is more effective in reducing crime. The Day Reporting Center makes sure that people follow through. Another concern is the Parks Department, which is not following its own procedures. They seem to ignore the desires of the neighborhoods. Parks Commissioners is appointed by the Mayor. Councilmember David Della has asked for an audit of the Parks Department's process. There is a general sense that the Parks Department has gone adrift. City Council is looking at reconfirmation of the Parks Superintendent (along with other City department heads).

Housing: Peter Steinbrueck's downtown rezone plan is more favorable on affordable housing than the Mayor's Plan. Other housing issues include the fate of SHARE/WHEEL, which offers 300 beds for homeless individuals. These beds are the cheapest beds in the city, but SHARE/WHEEL is balking at providing personal identification data on its clients. Its funding may be stripped. SHARE/WHEEL is threatening an April protest and setting up tent cities in Seattle's parks.

On the Energy and Technology committee, an April vote on the Comcast franchise is planned. Transportation is chaired by Jan Drago. The big issue there is the tunnel or viaduct rebuild--or a possible surface option. Nick called it the Big Ugly versus the Big Dig. A question about retrofitting the current viaduct was answered by pointing out the retrofit would cost almost as much as a complete new rebuild. Funding for any of these options could come from an infrastructure levy, a property tax, and a commercial parking tax. A series of workshops is planned around the city to hear from the citizens.

Gerry Pollet asked about school building closures and suggested the city come in with a levy to keep the schools open as community centers or as open space/green space. Nick reports the Mayor has said he will not favor a 2008 Pro Parks levy.

The Sonics/Key Arena: Governor Christine Gregoire would not let the Sonics force a deal unless the public got to vote on it. Jim McIntire commented the state shares some responsibility, because it approved building the other two stadiums, which took away business from the Key Arena. Someone pointed out the public didn't want either of those two stadiums. Nick Licata said the problem is the viability of Seattle Center, and the Key Arena is a "key" part of Seattle Center. Jim McIntire commented that Seattle Center is the city's cultural center, with or without the Sonics. The Sonics wanted financing options to allow them to build elsewhere in King County.

Sarajane Siegfriedt reported there were more resolutions opposing taxpayer bail-out of the Sonics put forward during the precinct caucuses than on any other issue except resolutions to impeach the President.

Jim McIntire commented the Sonics have paid out \$84 million toward the cost of the 1995 remodel, but if they leave in 2010 when their lease expires but they'll still leave \$29 million of public debt. Nick Licata commented that the Seattle Center without the Key Arena is viable, and that the Key Arena--without the debt--is also viable. He noted that the Sonics don't want to own Key Arena and have to pay taxes on it, but they want to control all the business enterprises that take place within it.

Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney: "I would not vote for another subsidy for another sports team."

Announcements

Magnuson Park "Petition to call for a Public Hearing by the Department of Planning and Development on Phase II Development of the park" is available at the back of the room.

The League of Women Voters' pamphlets "They Represent You" are available. PCO's should distribute them to their precincts. The 46th District Democrats are named as a sponsor on the back cover of the pamphlet.

King County Board – Property Tax – Pamphlets are available on how to appeal your property tax assessment.

A public hearing on the Comcast negotiations with the City of Seattle will be held Thursday, March 30th at 5:30PM in the Shaw Room at the Seattle Center.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25PM.

Minutes based on notes by Barbara Whitt