

46th Democrats
Olympic View Elementary School
March 19, 2009

Chad Lupkes called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM

Chad welcomed new participants, PCOs, and new members.

David Miller led the pledge of allegiance.

Elizabeth Willmott has handed in her resignation, because of a new personal opportunity that was presented to her. Chad appointed Erica Minshull to fill Elizabeth's position as King County Party Delegate on the Executive Board. At the April General Meeting, we will elect a permanent Executive Board member for that position.

Q: Why didn't we get paper ballots for the election today?

A: Chad explained some of the circumstances.

Legislative Action Committee (LAC) Report. Sarajane Siegfriedt and Steve Zemke co-chair the King County LAC. Sarajane said the state's revenue projection is down another \$500 million as of today. The Legislature will deliver an "all-cuts" budget. Sarajane expects popular support to grow for a revenue increase. That could come in the form of new taxes or reduction of loopholes. Sarajane is writing a letter to the Governor to outline our thoughts on the revenue package.

Virginia Gunby reminded everyone of the "Pacific Interchange" controversy regarding the 520 bridge. The most recent alternatives call for tunnels at that location instead of a large interchange with a bridge. The tunnel alternatives are more compact, but very expensive. A bill authorizing tolling on the bridge has not passed, so far this session. Federal funding depends on tolling at the state level.

Chad thanked those who attended the Town Hall at Meadowbrook Community Center last weekend.

Education policy panel. Gerry Pollet introduced our panel of speakers. Joe Willhoft (Assistant State Superintendent of Public Instruction), Sherry Carr (Seattle School Board), Lisa Macfarlane (League of Education Voters), Ramona Hattendorf (Seattle Council PTSA), Michael DeBbell (Seattle School Board)

Gerry said Washington is 46th among the states in terms of funding for public education. We have new plans at the state and local levels.

Randy Dorn was not able to make our meeting, but Joe Willhoft said he was happy to speak with us. Randy's top campaign promise was full funding of public education. Over time, Washington has been near the top in terms of school funding. Funding for education is under the same budget pressure felt by other needs.

Dropout and graduation rates are another priority for Randy Dorn. Improvement in these areas is challenging. We also want to expand career and technical opportunities to prepare students for good jobs. The WASL will be reformed, and Joe is responsible for that effort. This year's test was designed last year by the previous Superintendent of Schools. The new test will use new technologies, and results will be available sooner

than in past years. Randy Dorn's final campaign issue is early learning to prepare young students for K-12 education.

Lisa Macfarlane works on reforms and providing resources that students need. She worked on the Schools First! Levy campaign. The state budget situation is very bad. Levy levels are at the maximum allowed by law. Teacher contracts will be coming up in the fall. Federal stimulus money will be difficult to get, because of the merit pay requirements tied to Federal money. Lisa talked about some of the legislation in the current session. Lisa says the House bill she likes passed with broad support, but the Senate bill is more of a planning bill, and has fewer specifics. Freshman legislators are taking this issue seriously. Lisa talked about capital improvements, and balance between operating and capital budgets.

Ramona Hattendorf started in school issues as an activist parent. She hopes to improve communication between stakeholders. Ramona said only 17% of high school graduates are qualified to apply for colleges in the state. State funding for basic education doesn't fund enough class time to meet college standards. Citizens need to call their legislators and tell them to support full funding. Ken Jacobsen voted against the legislation Ramona favored.

Sherry Carr introduced her daughter, who took the WASL today. She showed a PowerPoint presentation that defined clear goals for Seattle Schools, as measured by math and reading performance, and graduation rates. She showed some tracking data, showing trends over the five years of the strategic plan. The strategy calls for aligning math and science programs. A common assessment "toolbox" will be used across the school district. Sherry wants to attract and retain the best teachers and staff. Our hiring process is not very efficient. We need to match existing school facilities to the numbers of students in different neighborhoods. The Board holds frequent meetings for community input.

Michael DeBell thanked us for inviting him to the forum. Michael thinks the current School Board is one of the best we've had in a long time. The Board faces serious challenges. Enrollment went up for the first time in many years. Our share of the budget shortfall is \$25 million, and the situation could get worse. Michael talked about some of the cost reductions that are underway. The Seattle Schools are trying to build a better relationship with the legislature. Education is the key to higher standard of living. The School Board and City Council will hold a joint meeting to help coordinate efforts at different levels. Safety and gang issues are another priority area. Michael is disappointed with the WEA and STA, teachers unions. Michael says we need to change the way we compensate teachers. The focus needs to be on quality of education in the classroom. He hopes to come to a new understanding with unions about seniority.

Q: We need a new way to evaluating teachers and remove bad teachers.

A: Lisa - this is part of the dialog going on now. Teachers are skeptical that funding will be forthcoming. For this to work, an authentic teacher voice will be needed.

Q: In what sense is Washington State 46th in the country in spending?

A: Dollars per student, adjusted for cost of living.

Q: What could the city do to help improve education?

A: Ramona wants a campaign along the lines of "You oughta think about college." As a community, we should emphasize college preparation. The City could set that tone.

Michael observed that the City and Schools share revenues from levies. Janet Miller would like to see the City help the schools out directly. Janet thinks the School Board needs to ask the City for support. Sherry Carr believes we need help with security in the schools, and the City could certainly help with that.

Q: Some teachers are negative about other cultures, and undermine students' sense of self worth. Can we train teachers to be more sensitive?

A: Joe described a character in a Studs Terkel play. His point was the value of training and professional development for teachers. He described some programs at the State level. Joe Willhoft explained how some of the bilingual programs in the Seattle Schools work.

Q: Thanks for your public service. Dropout rates are unconscionably high among minority populations, ... longer school days What innovations are you looking for?

A: Lisa points to the "New School" for pre-school and kindergarten. It gets philanthropic money. The Charter Schools idea was rejected by voters. Compensation reform, requires teachers to be at the table. The PTA should be much more active. We need better data to track outcomes realistically. Sherry spoke about the safety net program for students re-entering the schools. Online education might be suitable for older students who need to work. Ramona thinks funding will be easier if we can see results and improvements and the corresponding costs. Michael made the case that better results would justify better funding. Joe would like to see funding connected to better test scores. Five classes are not enough to provide a solid education.

Gerry thanked the panel.

Finance Committee. Kathryn Lewis showed a PowerPoint presentation about the budget. The Executive Board has reviewed the budget. This is a non-caucus year, so we will concentrate on building the organization. We can take a fresh look to make sure we get good returns on our funds. We want members to be familiar with our financials.

Kathryn explained how the budget was put together. She went through some history, comparing to previous years. Expenses and revenues were shown, broken out by major categories.

Motion made and seconded to accept the budget as presented by Kathryn. Sarajane made a **motion** to **amend** the budget to fund two partial scholarships to Camp Wellstone at \$100 each. Seconded. Kathryn said that this money would fit into the current budget. **Motion** to amend **passed** by show of hands. **Motion** to approve the budget as amended **passed** by show of hands.

Larry Phillips is running for King County Executive. He was pleased to hear the panel discussion on schools. He served on the House Education Committee when he was in the legislature. He has been a PCO for 25 years. Democratic Party principles and values are very important to him. We are very challenged by the economy at state, local and Federal level. Larry is one of the few elected officials at the state level who has voted in favor of a state income tax. Booth Gardiner asked for an income tax. The Republican Majority Leader at the time killed it. Larry has taken on the builders and other powerful interests in the state. He has been a leader in starting our light rail system, and the light rail expansion into the East Side.

Dave Bloom is a candidate for City Council and he lives in the 46th District. He wants to

make Seattle livable and affordable for families. We need more affordable housing and more living wage jobs. A living wage ordinance would help. Dave worked on programs for social change. He helped organize religious leaders to support the schools levy. Dave is endorsed by Sarajane Siegfriedt, Justin Simmons and Betty Means. He has endorsements from leaders around the City.

David Ginsberg is an elected PCO and a Democrat. He is concerned about the future of the City. His children are in the Seattle Schools. The issues today are the same ones we've been dealing with for years. We need new leaders to solve them. People are losing houses and jobs, and these should be top issues for the City Council. David is a community organizer.

Rusty Williams wants to get the West Seattle Bridge named after his mother, Jeannette Williams. He is running for City Council, and will speak to the district about his campaign at future meetings..

Motion to endorse the resolution to name the West Seattle Bridge after Jeanette Williams, as printed in the Demogram. **Motion passed** by show of hands.

Dave Miller spoke to us in November. Since then he has campaigned hard and he has spoken to many voters and groups. He has been a community organizer and is a member of the 46th Democrats. He has passed legislation on the environment and better land use rules. The City Council should interact constructively with the School Board. Good ideas come from regular people in our communities. He will be doorbelling in the District.

David Garcia is a veteran of World War II. He encouraged everyone to go to a meeting in Shoreline where veterans issues will be discussed.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 PM.

Minutes by Stan Sorscher