

Perry County Democratic Committee
Minutes
3/18/21

Attendees:

Jacob Zentichko	Jerry Philpott	Dana Cotton
Karen Anderson	Ann Miller	Jane Hoover
Melanie Wertz	Barb Hench	Ann Miller
Codi Steigerwalt	Lukas Gilbert	Emily Burt-Hedrick

Meeting opened at 6:33 PM EDT.

Minutes from 2/18/21 meeting were approved unanimously, after a motion for approval by Jerry, and a second by Melanie.

Jacob provided an update on the Rural Caucus Agricultural Subcommittee. They are working to finalize a mission statement and list of objectives. These will be used to get the issues into the Democratic platform for PA.

Jacob suggested that the current concerns about poor conditions in huge conglomerate meat-packing companies could be leveraged to push for increased interest and business for local meat processing, which could benefit local Perry County farmers.

The Rural Caucus has been around less than 5 years. The Agricultural subcommittee had been dormant, but is now being re-animated.

Jerry reported, in the Financial report, that the Committee gained 3 cents in interest in the last month, giving us a balance of \$2491.65.

Jacob mentioned a query that he received on Campaign Finance Reform, in which the committee were asked for information. Jacob asked that all check the website cited on the Meeting invitation email, <https://citizenstakeaction.org>. Melanie pointed out that the group wants to lobby on campaign finance reform, and they are looking for endorsements from county Democratic committees. Jerry asked what reforms that the group is looking at. Melanie did not have the details. Jacob

will work to get additional details. If you have feedback on this, after reading website, please send to Jacob.

Codi Steigerwalt was with us for the first few minutes of the meeting, but he reported that he would have to leave because he was about to go through airport security to fly, due to an emergency.

Jacob reminded us that a new election cycle is upon us. There is the PA GOP survey that came out recently—Melanie had sent it to committee members—in which they want comments on “election security” issues.

<https://pasenelectioncommittee.com/submit-comments>

Jacob asked that people put in comments—we need to have Democratic comments, not just self-serving comments. Emily reported that she had answered it, and made it clear that we need to get EVERY VOTE counted, and that Perry County mail-in balloting was well done and secure and handled by bi-partisan, cooperative volunteers.

If you wish to be a poll worker, you need to sign up on the PA State website.

<https://www.votespa.com/Resources/pages/be-a-poll-worker.aspx>

For Elections office workers—those who will help open and sort mail-in ballots at the county office building—that will be a separate sign-up volunteer list. So far Jacob has not heard anything about creating that sign-up list. Melanie will ask at an upcoming Commissioner meeting about that.

There is a Referendum on the Primary ballot—cited in the PeCoTimes—that would limit the duration of a “state of emergency”, declared by the Governor, to 28 days. If it would need to be extended after that, it would require the agreement of the State House and Senate. This would be an amendment to the PA constitution.

There was a good deal of discussion about this. First, it is clear that the State GOP dominated legislature wants to use this to curb the power of Governor Wolf, and to use it politically against him.

Dana pointed out that this should not be a partisan issue. It may be a good idea to limit this state of emergency to 28 days.

Jane pointed out that the governor would be unable to veto the legislature's ending of a state of emergency. Given the current pandemic emergency, that could be dangerous.

But Dana responded that an extended state of emergency could be used to suppress otherwise legal protests. This proposed change to the constitution is being done for the WRONG reasons, but could be good policy in "normal" emergencies, such as floods and other weather emergencies.

Melanie pointed out that the pandemic is different, and there will be more pandemics in the future.

Again, Dana pointed out the concern about suppression of demonstrations and protests. Jerry also noted that an extended "state of emergency" has been used in other countries to suppress protests against unfair conditions, to suppress citizens' attempts to get redress from their governments.

Jerry also mentioned that an unlimited state of emergency can be a problem no matter who is in power.

Jacob mentioned that we need to be on the lookout for gerrymandering....we may see some attempts before the general election in November.

Dana again asked that people respond to the Perry County Comprehensive plan survey. It will be open for maybe another month or so. The website for the survey is <https://www.tcrpc-pa.org/picture-perry>

Karen brought up her concern about Congressman Fred Keller's recent vote in Congress (Federal) against the Violence Against Women Act. She recalled how the Perry County Voices group had tried to meet with the previous Congressman Marino, and had been rebuffed. We need to be able to meet with our Congressman, and let him know our concerns. Is anyone trying to address the issue of Republicans trying to end the Mail-in Ballots? Perhaps Letters to the Editor from Democratic Committees would be helpful.

Similarly, we have concerns about the State representative, Perry Stambaugh. Karen has tried to contact Perry Stambaugh and been rebuffed. We want to know what his stand is on Mail-in Ballots. He was elected by many votes that were on mail-in ballots last November.

Melanie mentioned that Mark Whitmoyer had tried to set up communication with the Juniata Cty Democratic committee chair....she will find the name, and provide to Jacob.

Dana suggested we might want to create subcommittees for each Federal Congressional District, so that Democrats could as a group bring issues and meet with Representative Keller.

Barb Hensch pointed out that Keller represents 10 counties, from Central PA, all the way up to the NY border. Would it make sense to have two subcommittees—5 counties each?

Jacob will need to contact the 10 Democratic Committee chairs in Keller's district; he will start networking through the Rural Caucus meeting this month.

Dana pointed out that there is already a Facebook group for 12th District Democrats:

www.facebook.com/groups/287491101594523

That may be a good place to start—by joining that group.

Dana then brought up an issue that Codi Steigerwalt (who had to leave early) had mentioned to her about the Magisterial District Judge (MDJ) election. Codi is on the ballot, as both Democrat and Republican. Clark Steele is also running for this position. Apparently Clark Steele failed the exam to be certified for this position. Codi is certified. Codi brought this to the Ethics Board that is overseeing these positions. If Clark Steele is not certified, and is elected in November, then he will not be able to serve, and do the work, until he is certified.

The group then discussed whether or not this problem—potential election of a MDJ who cannot yet serve (pending passing the test for certification)—should be brought to the electorate through a Letter to the Editor? Should the Democratic Committee send such a letter? The group seemed to think that any letter from the Democratic committee about this situation, which would endorse a candidate (Codi), would be black mark against the candidate. It was suggested that Dana might do better to send a Letter to the Editor under her name.

It was agreed that first we need to get the exact facts. Which candidate is certified now? What exam opportunities exist for Clark Steele, for any non-certified candidate, to get certified before November? Dana will ask Codi for the facts. Dana will then work with others to get a letter together, but prefers that it go under someone else's name.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:38PM, after a motion from Jerry, second by Emily.