

Eau Claire County Democratic Party Coffee Klatch Notes

Thursday, March 14, 2019

Present: Bob Andruszkiewicz, Marjorie Bunce, Carlyn Conway, Carol Craig (facilitator), Jan Frase, Dale & Chuck Gable, Judy Gatlin, Bonnie Golden, Carolyn Haar, Constance Heffernan, Ann Heywood, Sally Lee, Bob Matthews, Ann McKinley, Paul Miller, Linda Norton, Tim Nordin, Mike O'Brien, Elaine Olson, Diane Omtvedt, Kitty Rahl, Connie Russell (recorder), John Sandquist, Maureen Slason, Jeff Smith, Liz Spencer, Kathy Tuttle, Pat Williams, Bob Wojnowski, (30)

Guest Speakers: Tim Nordin, School Board Candidate

UPCOMING EVENTS

Next Coffee Klatch -- Thursday, March 21; 10 a.m. – 12 Noon; Resource Center, 440 Broadway St.

Come join a lively conversation about April election, local and national candidates, and other current events – share opinions, experiences, resources with a progressive-minded community of hardy survivors of this Wisconsin winter. Come when you can, leave when you must. The coffee will be on and the treats will be out.

March 28 -- **Erica Zerr**, candidate for the ECASD **School Board**, will attend Coffee Klatch to present her views on education in our district and answer questions.

City Council Candidate Forum -- Thursday, March 21; 6:30 p.m.; Chippewa Valley Technical College, 620 Clairemont Ave. There are ten candidates running for five at-large seats on the Council.

Climate Change Film – Tuesday, March 26; 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.; L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library, 400 Eau Claire St. The public is invited to learn more about the local impacts of climate change. The film, "*Our Wisconsin: The Climate Change Effect*" was created and first broadcast by WKOW-TV in Madison. The 55-minute film explains the impact on our state economy, from insurance rates to home construction, and to the state's important ag industry. The film is sponsored by the Eau Claire chapter of Citizens' Climate Lobby. Come discuss your observations and talk about solutions. Learn about a new bill introduced in the 2019 US House that will price carbon pollution and return the money as a dividend to households.

B.R.A.I.N. Conference -- Thursday, April 4; 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. Florian Gardens, 2340 Lorch Ave.

The focus of this year's conference is *The Puzzle of Poverty: Putting the Pieces Together*. The event is put on by the Brain Research Awareness Integration Network, group of area professional interested in children and their future. Their mission is to promote optimal development of all children by integrating current brain research into educational, child care, parenting, prevention and intervention programs in Eau Claire County. Sponsored by UW Extension and the Mayo Clinic Health System. Keynote speakers include Dr. Dipesh Navsaria, who will explore what constant, unopposed stress does to young children's abilities, and Hasan Davis, who will discuss how we can build living and learning communities where all people have the opportunity to succeed.

Registration fee: \$85. Registration required [Online Registration](#)

Community Conversation – "Our Politics" – Saturday, April 6; 1 – 3 p.m.; Menomonie Public Library.

Douglas Kane, husband of former Senator Kathleen Vinehout, will be presenting his new book, "[Our Politics: Reflections on Our Political Life](#)" Kane served as a representative in the Illinois State Legislature as well as being involved in local Wisconsin politics. Open to the public.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Local candidates are invited to Klatch -- We will attempt to make sure all local candidates for offices this spring know that they are welcome to attend a Klatch gathering to have a conversation. Note: the EC Dems do not endorse candidates.

Yard Signs -- Signs are available for local candidates, as well as for Supreme Court Justice candidate, Lisa Neubauer. There are only two weeks to the April 2 election. Stop down to the Resource Center to pick them up.

Conventions

3rd Congressional District – Saturday, May 4, WTC campus, La Crosse

DPW – Saturday & Sunday, June 1 & 2, Potawatomi Hotel and Casino, Milwaukee

DNC – Monday – Thursday, July 13 – 16, 2020, Fiserv Forum, Milwaukee

Now is the time to sign up to be a delegate to the 3rd CD and/or state DPW conventions. April 20 is the deadline to sign up to be an EC County delegate to the 3rd CD convention on May 4 in LaCrosse. Delegates will be voting on resolutions and for a new 3rd CD Chair. Lisa Herrmann is stepping down, but – Good News!—our own Bobbi Green is stepping up to run for 3rd Chair. EC County submitted resolutions on a variety of areas, including “fair maps”, voting rights, renewable energy, mass transit, minimum wages, health care, and gun violence. Registration opens at 9 a.m. Car pooling will be set up.

Delegates to the 3rd CD convention are automatically delegates to the state DPW convention June 1 & 2.

DNC 2020 Convention in Milwaukee: 12,000 volunteers will be needed to help host the event. Check out how to apply to become a volunteer [HERE](#). Details will be coming later on the process for becoming a DNC delegate.

Volunteers Needed: Front Desk coverage is needed for shifts on March 27, 28, and 29. Contact the Resource Center if you can help out.

Learning in Retirement: The spring/summer schedule of classes offered through Chippewa Valley Learning in Retirement is underway. Check out the CVLR [website](#) to learn more.

RECOMMENDED READING/VIEWING

“The Public Library” – An essay by local author Nickolas Butler printed in the March 6 issue of VolumeOne magazine. [Link to Essay](#)

Shortest Way Home: One Mayor’s Challenge and a Model for America’s Future by Pete Buttigieg

An autobiography by the young mayor of South Bend, Indiana who put his decaying midwestern city back on the road to recovery. Buttigieg is one of the lesser-known contenders for POTUS in 2020, but has been gaining attention. Listen to his February 28 Pod Save America [interview](#) and his appearance at a recent CNN [townhall](#).

DISCUSSION:

Tim Nordin – Candidate for the ECASD School Board

Background:

- Bachelor’s degree from Iowa State University and a Master’s and Ph D from Rutgers University.
- Former science teacher.
- Married and has two children in EC public schools
- Has served on the district’s Demographic Trends & Facility Planning Committee since 2016

Views on education:

- Teachers are the lifeblood of education and should be given more autonomy in teaching. School boards and administrators should seek their input and listen to their insights on the difficult issues facing the district.
- Not all students are the same, so not all teaching should be the same. There should be multiple paths for student learning, such as innovation zones.

Prompted to run for the Board because:

- The current board has been too slow in making critical decisions that affect students and their families.
- Has a passion to “do” education differently.

Vison:

- To see Eau Claire be a beacon in the state by putting innovative programs in place that will encourage in-migration of students to the district.

Issues discussed by the group:

- Boundary changes – This is a difficult issue. The district attempts to keep the boundary lines contiguous while leveling enrollment to avoid over-crowding and trying to make the best decisions for the entire district, which may not be satisfactory for specific populations. There are differences of opinion on the better approach: neighborhood centric vs the “regional” approach.
- Resource allocations between the northside and southside schools – Northside families continue to feel short-changed by the system. Awareness of this perception may also slow down decision making by the board.
- Charter Schools – Tim is currently assisting the Mondovi district in setting up a charter school.

Tim explained the proposal to turn Little Red into a LAND (Liberal Arts and Nature Design) school focused on integrating learning outside into the full curriculum.

There was a general discussion about the operational and funding differences between traditional public schools and the various types of charter schools. Public charters are part of a school district and teach all the same subjects as regular schools and are subject to the same accountability measures. Examples include McKinley Charter School in Eau Claire and the Wildlands Charter School at Beaver Creek Reserve that is part of the Augusta school district. Online charter schools have been proposed and there seems to be student interest in that option.

- Funding and Budget --The prospect of increased K-12 funding in the Governor's proposed budget gives some hope, but it is a dim light given the GOP-controlled legislature. Tim would like to see small changes that won't cost much, but which would draw some students back into the district that have been lost to open enrollment. If cuts have to be made, Tim thinks it's important to have the teachers and staff involved in developing solutions. Also discussed was how the Board should act regarding the offer of \$1.2 million from anonymous donors for upgrades to Memoria High School's athletic facilities. The "strings" attached and the long-term financial obligations are downsides to accepting the gift.
- College Prep vs Trade School tracks – Tim believes both are needed and more could be done to use apprenticeship, journeyman, and mentor programs. Also, schools need to show parents that trade school training is often the best post-secondary option for many students.
- Home Schooling – Members talked about the rising trend in homeschooling. Many students perform well in the home environment, even though Wisconsin is fairly loose in regulation of this option.
- Increase in students with mental health issues – Tim thinks many kids with mental health issues would benefit from other "paths" of learning – not every student fits in the "box."

To learn more:

See March 14 Leader Telegram [article](#) covering the recent school board candidate forum and the Valley Media Works [interview](#) with Tim.

State Legislature Update (Jeff Smith, State Senator)

Re-districting – After the 2020 Census, the legislature will redraw the district maps, which Governor Evers can veto, like any other act or bill. If the Governor and legislature cannot agree on the maps, It would likely end up going to the US District Court and re-drawing of the maps would be done by a federal judge.

Voter Protection Act introduced. Covers automatic voter registration and other measures to protect voters at the polls

Make-up of school days – Republicans have proposed exempting "qualifying" districts from meeting the required number of days. Most districts will have at least some schools that do not qualify for the exemption.

Getting things done – It's necessary to get co-authors on bills in order to get bills moving through the process.

Power of The Veto – It may take a lot of vetoing of legislation by the Governor before the GOP ship turns around and comes to the table with a more cooperative posture.