

Eau Claire County Democratic Party Coffee Klatch Notes

Thursday, January 3, 2019

Present: Terry Ajir, Kate Beaton, Lee Beier, Laura Benjamin, Steve & Chris Hambuch-Boyle, Marjorie Bunce, Carlyn Conway, Carol Craig (facilitator), Carolyn Dunning, Ann Francis, Jan Frase, Judy Gatlin, Carolyn Haar, Gail Halmstad, Constance Heffernan, Ann Heywood, Sharon Hildebrand, Gloria Hochstein, Carole Johnson, Linda Ladolce, Pam Lee, Bob Matthews, Ann McKinley, Connie Russell (recorder), John Sandquist, Jeff Smith, Liz Spencer, Andrew Werthmann, Pat Williams, Eleanor Wolf (31)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Next Coffee Klatch: Thursday, January 10, 10 a.m. – 12 Noon; Resource Center, 440 Broadway St.

Come to the next Klatch to watch/discuss the Great Decisions video on [Media and Foreign Policy](#), which was shown at a recent Chippewa Valley Learning in Retirement class. This video will cover the importance of the media and the First Amendment.

Meeting: Community Coalition for Non-Violence: Thursday, January 10; 1 p.m.; 2516 E. Princeton Ave., Eau Claire (home of Jan and Lou Frase). Join forces with others in this local non-partisan group focusing on addressing the culture of violence in our society. The group is hoping to follow the strategies of [Paul K. Chappelle](#), author of *The Art of Waging Peace*, and a featured speaker at last year's [10 Days of Peace](#) event put on by the [Twin Cities Non-Violent](#) organization. The goal is to help people and communities to develop "muscle" to wage peace with the same intensity and strategic actions we use to wage war. A holistic approach is being envisioned that will address care of the environment, roots of poverty, and treatment of mental illness.

Monthly Meeting & Campaign/Election Debriefing: Tuesday, January 22, 6 p.m. - ??; Resource Center, 440 Broadway St. 6 – 7:30 will be a potluck supper and meeting, followed at 7:30 p.m. with a debriefing session with DPW Chair Martha Laning.

Candidate Forums: The following candidate forums have been scheduled by the EC Chamber of Commerce and its media partners – the Leader-Telegram, WQOW TV-18, WPR and Valley Media Works. All of the forums will be held at the [Chippewa Valley Technical College's Business Center](#). Each will include a moderated Q&A session plus an informal meet & greet opportunity with the candidates.

Thursday, Feb. 7, 6:30 p.m. – Eau Claire City Council At-large

Thursday, Mar. 7, 6:30 p.m. – Eau Claire City Council President

Thursday, Mar. 14, 6:30 p.m. – Eau Claire Area School District Board

Vision 2020 Fundraiser event for EC County Dems: Saturday, March 16, evening. Featured speaker will be Lt. Governor Mandela Barnes.

RECOMMENDED READING/LISTENING

Free political news Podcasts, such as [The Wilderness](#) and Rachel Maddow's [Bag Man](#)

DISCUSSION

Happy New Year! There was a collective toast to good health and good public policy in 2019 and resounding approval of Carol's Christmas gift, a new T-shirt sporting the question: "Can we just admit we've taken this *anyone can grow up to be President* thing just a bit too far?"

Spring Elections

Mark your calendars! Primary election – Tuesday, [February 19](#) and Spring Election, [April 2](#)

Tuesday, [January 29](#) will be the deadline for people to register to vote online before the Feb. 19 election.

Canvassing for progressive candidates will be starting up on Saturday, [January 12](#), at the Resource Center. [City Council](#)

There are five at-large seats up for election in April. As of January 2, 12 people have filed candidate forms; therefore, the field must be reduced to 10 during the Feb. 19 primary. Both progressive and conservative leaning candidates have come forward, including some incumbents, to run for the five non-partisan seats.

Andrew Werthmann and Terry Weld will also be running on the ballot for Council President.

Kate Beaton and Andrew Werthmann, incumbents, and Laura Benjamin, new candidate, were present at Klatch to talk about their political experience and platform issues for promoting a progressive vision.

School Board

There are four candidates for three open seats: Aaron Harder and Eric Torres are seeking re-election. Erica Zerr, and Tim Nordin are also running. This is also a non-partisan race. Voters should review the voting records of incumbents and question the new comers on their positions on vital school district issues, such as budget priorities in a time of constraints when the board essentially must make “non-choices” like funding teacher retirement promises and language immersion initiatives. There is some good news for public schools in that there appears to be more support for a transparency bill that will inform taxpayers of the portion of their tax bill being routed from public to private schools. Racine has already decided to implement this change. See Milwaukee Journal Sentinel [article](#).

Candidates at Klatch?

There was a brief discussion regarding whether or not to invite all candidates to come to our Coffee Klatch gatherings. The general consensus was that invitations should be extended and there would be some effort to schedule their appearances in 20-minute segments. Candidates will be asked to talk about their platforms and what they hope to bring to the city and school district.

Bravo! – There was a big applause for everyone willing to run for and serve on the council and boards – positions that are often the targets of criticism for little compensation.

State Supreme Court

Candidates for retiring Justice Shirley Abrahamson’s seat will be Lisa Neubauer and Brian Hagedorn. Neubauer is backed by progressives and her campaign literature will be included in our canvassing. Check out her [website](#). Hagedorn is backed by conservatives. He was Scott Walker’s former chief legal counsel and was appointed by Walker in 2015 as an appeals court judge.

Voters as Consumers – When evaluating candidates, it’s a good idea to find out which candidates corporations are supporting with their profits.

2020

There was some discussion of the chances of potential Democratic presidential candidates. Names tossed out included Elizabeth Warren, Beto O’Rourke, Amy Klobuchar, Joe Biden.

City Council Issues

Andrew Werthmann and Kate Beaton were present to answer questions about actions taken by the City Council during its recent budget approval meeting.

- The budget approval process for the City seems to limit the input of Council members resulting in some communication breakdowns. City staff apparently implemented service cuts (e.g. removing portable toilets from public parks) to offset the addition of positions introduced at the budget session. Those actions are being reviewed and reversed.
- **Participatory Budgeting:** \$25,000 has been set aside to hire a consultant to help design a process for allowing neighborhoods to gather ideas and set priorities for projects in their areas, using a amount set aside in the city’s budget. This process has been implemented with success in many other communities and is becoming a common trend.
- The Council was thanked for adding a public comment session to the Monday night meetings at which citizens can talk about any issue of concern.
- The [Joint Committee on Shared Services](#) has not met for a long time. This would be a way of promoting collaboration instead of competition among the various public entities in our community. In the past, this committee was able to institute the CINC network and conduct a health care study. How can this group be resurrected?

Conservative Media

There was a brief discussion about concerns raised by the growth of the Sinclair Broadcast Group. See [New Yorker article](#) and [Politico article](#)

Water Quality Crisis

A recent [report](#) in the Wisconsin State Journal with the headline, Hazardous drinking water found in 42% of southwest Wisconsin wells, should be a wake-up call to all people in Wisconsin. As the article points out, contaminated drinking water isn't just a problem for Kewaunee and Door counties. This is a widespread danger that needs to be addressed with more immediate force.

From the article: *"After years of pressure from residents and the federal government, Walker approved the new manure standards. But the Wisconsin Dairy Business Association fought to narrow the rule, and it was limited to the 15 eastern counties because more was known about the geology and groundwater there. The regulations **aren't yet being enforced** because required technical standards weren't included in the rule approved in 2018 by the Natural Resources Board and Gov. Scott Walker **after two year of work by the DNR.**"*

It takes more than passing legislation – it must be implemented. Perhaps new DNR leadership will move regulation enforcement forward.

The report generated interest in the legislature also. See related [WPR article](#).

This would be a good topic for a Rural Issues Forum. Eau Claire County's [Ag Ordinance Review Special Committee](#) is planning something along that line with a coalition of sponsors.

Governor Evers' Appointments

At least one the new people in the cabinet has visited Klatch in the past: Brad Pfaff from Ron Kind's office.

- Administration: Joel Brennan
- Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: Brad Pfaff
- Budget: Brian Pahnke
- Children and Families: Emilie Amundson
- Corrections: Kevin Carr
- Financial Institutions: Kathy Kolin Blumenfeld
- Health Services: Andrea Palm
- Insurance Commissioner: Mark Afable
- Natural Resources: Preston Cole
- Public Service Commission: Rebecca Cameron Valco
- Revenue: Peter Barca
- Safety and Professional Services: Dawn Crim
- Tourism: Sara Meaney
- Transportation: Craig Thompson
- Veterans Affairs: Mary Kolar
- Workforce Development: Caleb Frostman

On the National Front

- News about the government shutdown keeps changing. Mitch McConnell could bring it to a vote, but GOP Congressional leadership continues to be afraid to challenge Trump.
- There's been an alarming shift in the Trump's administration's reason for the wall: National Security, which could mean using presidential powers to address a "National Emergency."
See Washington Post [article](#)
- The shutdown has been particularly hard on working class folks. Democrats need to send a clear message about which party is causing this hardship.
- The Evangelical/Political connection is a real influence in policy making, going back to the Puritans. Evangelical politicians believe it is their divine right to make decision for others.
- Question: How to respond to the anticipated nasty rhetoric that will surface in the lead-up to the 2020 elections? Answer: Ignore, get to work, and be honest. *"We will not be trivialized!"*

Add to your list of New Year's Resolutions – *"I believe we can make a difference."*