

GREENE COUNTY REPUBLICAN COMMITTEE MEETING

Stanardsville Court House

Notes taken January 16, 2017 and authored by Aaron Moyer, Recording Secretary

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Ed Yensho at 7:05pm.

Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance and GOP Creed

Invocation was given by Barbara Nye, the Pledge was led by Daniel Rose, and the Republican Creed was read by Darla Rose.

Reinstatement of Members

No inactive members were present who required reinstatement of their voting privileges.

Roll Call

The Roll Call was then taken by the Secretary, and a quorum of 19 was present. This was later increased to 20 after a late arrival.

Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the November 21, 2016, meeting had been distributed with the Call for this meeting, so their reading was dispensed. Chairman Yensho asked for any corrections. Philip Morris questioned the validity of the 7:36pm adjournment time that had been listed for the November meeting. The Secretary said he'd confirm that and make a correction if appropriate. There being no other issues, Ed asked for a motion that the minutes be approved as distributed, with that one possible exception. Philip Morris made that motion, and Steve Morris gave a second. The minutes were then approved by a unanimous voice vote.

Treasurer's Report

Chairman Yensho began by summarizing the financial accounting activities since Scott Winslow's resignation as Treasurer at the end of our November meeting. He said that he and Mary Jeffries, the new Treasurer, had gotten together and created reports for October, November, and December, based only on our bank statements. Those had been distributed via email late today, so all members may not yet have seen those. Mary added that she would be working on the committee's annual budget, and that should be available at our next meeting. Ed and Mary announced that they are looking for another volunteer to join the finance committee to work on that budget and to review all the financial transactions from the past year. Bob Young has already agreed to chair that committee. If it was okay with the committee, Ed said he would like to defer the approval of the most recent financial reports until our February meeting. His reason for making this request was because only he had prepared those, and he would like someone else to be involved. Daniel Rose made that motion, and Gary Lowe gave a second. The motion then passed by a unanimous voice vote. Finally, Mary noted that she is now collecting our annual dues, so our members can give those to her anytime.

Admission of New Member

Ed said he'd been talking with Frank Morris since October, and he had expressed an interest in joining our committee. With that, Ed asked Frank to address the committee to explain who he is and why he'd like to join. Frank did that, noting that he has his own business and manages a farm

with his sister. He is a life-long Republican and is currently serving on both the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) and the Planning Commission. He specifically said he'd like to work to get prayers reinstated in all of our county meetings and wants to work closely with Emergency Services to improve that department's assistance to our community. Following Frank's remarks, a voice vote was taken to accept him as a member of our committee; and the results were unanimously in favor.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Yensho began his report by summarizing what he sees as the current status of our Republican Party in Virginia. After witnessing the activities surrounding the two 2016 Primary elections, as well as the campaign activities thus far for all of this year's state-wide races, Ed doesn't see any improvement in the way we are campaigning. In fact, he believes the conservative cause is hurting itself. For more than a decade, conservatives have had a loose alliance of people who didn't always agree on everything; but they were willing to work together for the common goal of getting Republican candidates elected. However, since last year's two Primary races, Ed has seen a lot of animosity among politically active people. A good example of this was a vote that was taken at the December SCC meeting. A prior RPV General Counsel (GC) ruling related to the Incumbent Protection Act had been appealed, and an "SCC Appeals Committee" comprised of a limited number of people had denied that appeal. The State Party Plan (SPP) clearly says that the entire SCC membership is the final arbiter of appeals. However, the RPV GC had issued a decision saying that once an appeal was ruled on by the Appeals Committee, it cannot be reconsidered by the entire SCC body. Ed's opinion is that the conservatives' prior loose alliance would likely have resulted in the SCC voting to overturn that GC ruling; or, at the very least, the vote would have been very close. Ed had participated in a phone conference call just three days prior to the 12/9/16 SCC meeting, and at the end of that call, everyone had agreed to overturn the GC ruling. In spite of this tentative agreement, the vote taken at the SCC meeting lost by over 12 votes! Returning to the current state-wide candidate races, Ed said it appeared to him that they may be going negative. Consequently, he admonished everyone to work hard for their chosen candidates; but leave out the vindictiveness and personal attacks. Otherwise, by the June 2017 Primary, there may be nothing left of our conservative movement!

Local Action Committee Reports

Ed informed Deloris Linam that Mike Allers wants her to contact him about when the next School Board meeting will be held, so he can join her. Ed then asked Deloris to give a summary of her previously distributed written report on the latest School Board meetings. Deloris began by noting that the January meeting had been designated as an organizational meeting, and Leah Paladino had been elected as the new chairwoman, and Harry Daniels will be the new vice-chair. There had been only one action item on the agenda for that meeting, and it was consideration of the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Update that had been presented at the December SB meeting by Kristie Spencer, Director of Business and Facilities. With very little discussion, this update was unanimously approved by the Board.

As reported from the December SB meeting, which Deloris was not able to attend, the discussion of the CIP at that time showed \$19M being spent over the next five years, with the bulk of that occurring in 2019. In FY2017, \$30K will be spent for new HS bleachers, \$40K for excavation and waterproofing of the HS gym and business wing, \$35K for paving of the Primary School playground and parking lots, and \$70K for track resurfacing.

There were also two informational items presented at the January SB meeting. First, Adam Midock (NGES Assistant Principal) and Sarah Baran (Community Liaison) had reported on the new Little

Dragon Backpack Program currently underway at NGES and NGPS. That program provides pack packs of food for weekends to help families in need. Currently, the program is providing assistance to 29 students, which represents 17 different families. According to Ms. Baran, there are plans to expand the program in the near future.

The second informational item had been presented by Superintendent Whitmarsh, where she provided an outlook on items related to the FY2018 budget. The near-term important dates were as follows:

- 1/24 – The SB and BoS will hold a joint workshop to discuss the schools’ needs
- 1/25 – The SB will hold a budget work session to draft a budget proposal
- 2/10 – SB meeting, where there will be a public hearing on the budget proposal
- 2/22 – SB meeting, where a budget will be adopted [*note that this date was a correction of Deloris’ mistakenly reported date of 2/24*]

Dr. Whitmarsh also discussed some of the factors that will be influencing the upcoming budget proposal. These were as follows:

- A projection that school enrollment will remain flat
- An increase in the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) contribution rates – a 10% increase over the prior year (an extra \$326K)
- An estimated 15% increase in health insurance premiums (an extra \$357K)
- No expectation of an increase in operating expenses (utility bills, fuel, etc.)
- The anticipated revenues from state, federal, and local governments

Dr. Whitmarsh had noted that the budget process had begun in the late fall, and she had received requests for over \$1.7M in additional funding at that time.

Next, Ed asked Keith Bourne to give us a report on the latest BoS meetings. Keith said that a BoS meeting had been held on 12/13/17. Not a lot had gone on at that meeting, but of particular significance had been that this was the first meeting that had been live-streamed on the Internet by the county. Each meeting is now supposed to also be archived for later viewing by anyone, and these will be available on the county’s website.

Another BoS meeting had been held on 1/10/17, and the items on the agenda were fairly inconsequential. However, there were some items in the County Administrator’s report that were significant. First, the auditor’s report for FY2016 will be presented at the 1/24 BoS meeting, following the joint meeting that will be held with the School Board, as just reported by Deloris Linam. At that meeting, the BoS also intends to discuss the county’s “reserve policy”. Keith noted that the county had previously been criticized for counting the county’s assets as part of its reserve, instead of the actual cash on hand. Another item in the Administrator’s report had been that “special assessment tax districts” are being examined by the county. Keith said that these districts are typically established to fund specific projects in specific areas, and he believes the county is looking at this as a potential source of funding for the pending water impoundment project. In that case, only the people located in the areas serviced by the public water supply would be levied at a higher tax rate. While Keith believes such a solution to our county’s current financial struggles has some merit, his biggest concern is that these higher tax rates would likely have no sunset date; and it will never go away! Keith added that nothing is being done on this issue right now, but he believes this is something that we all need to keep an eye on. Someone asked if the county may pause their search for funding of the water project, pending possible actions by President Trump that could roll back some of the costs associated with burdensome EPA regulations. Keith said the county was actually being forced to take that pause, because it was having difficulty in finding the financing.

He believes this is largely the result of Greene County not having previously obtained a public credit rating, which means they can't issue bonds.

Following Keith's remarks, Connie Stevens said she had two important points to make. First, she felt that a big "thank you" needed to go to Bob Young for being a burr under the BoS' saddle – for having made a consistent effort to regularly provide video streaming of the BoS meetings for some time. She believes that alone was the primary motivator for them having finally taken the step of providing the public with their own online video streaming of their meetings! Second, now that these meetings are being video-streamed, the county is no longer providing the public with preliminary information in a timely manner before each meeting. Neither the traditional information packets nor the administrative reports are available in advance, so people won't know what's going on until they're actually in a BoS meeting. Keith added that he had frequently experienced great difficulty in locating information – just because the county appeared to be making an effort hide it. To summarize, Connie said she felt like the county had lost some of its prior transparency.

On a related subject, Keith added that people should consider attending some of the county's Economic Development Authority (EDA) meetings. Without meaning to put him on the spot, he then asked Bob Young if he'd like to add any observations about some of this organization's recent financial decisions. Bob began by saying that he had only recently learned that Virginia allows local governments to levy what is known as a Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT). By Virginia statute, this tax must be 2% or less of gross receipts, and it can be levied on any business that provides short-term overnight accommodations, such as hotels and bed-and-breakfasts. In addition, since Greene County is one of a long list of counties that have been designated as "tourist destinations", it is allowed to charge a tax of up to 5%. However, any tax revenue collected above the 2% level must be segregated and used specifically to promote tourism. Bob said that he knows of no other type of business that can levy taxes specifically for its own benefit. One local example of the use of these funds is an unnamed Greene County business that applied for a one-to-one matching grant from the state. Last year, it received \$150K of state funds and another \$150K of local matching funds. The local funds were supposed to come from Greene's TOT, but the EDA didn't have that much ear-marked money on hand. So, with authorization from the Greene County Tourism Advisory Board, it loaned \$150K to the business. The county is now committed to repaying that loan over an expected five-year period, from the revenue it collects on an ongoing basis from its existing local TOT. The result of all this is that the local business has received \$300K in interest-free taxpayer money to invest in its facilities. Therefore, it has avoided the need to contribute to the local economy, through the creation of new money from the private lending process, which would have otherwise occurred. Following Bob's remarks, Keith noted that it is significant that the local organization is designated as an "authority". That designation implies that it is supposed to return revenue to the county. However, that possibility seems questionable in this case. Connie added that people can find out more about this TOT from Bob's op-ed, which she has already posted on the GCRC website.

Guest Speakers

Joe _____ was on hand as a representative of Ed Gillespie, who is running for Governor. He spoke briefly about Ed's candidacy and why he is supporting him. He also noted that he has petitions available for people to sign to get Ed on the ballot, and he hoped everyone who hadn't already signed would do that. Joe concluded by saying that he'd be available for questions after the meeting.

Next, Jacob Neff was with us, representing Glenn Davis, who is running for Lieutenant Governor. Jacob began by saying that he is the Regional Field Director in the 5th District for Glenn. Referring to Chairman Yensho's remarks about the in-fighting currently being experienced within the Republican Party, Jacob noted that the current LG race was a prime example of that. He then called everyone's attention to the fact that Glenn Davis is the only LG candidate who has stayed on message, not getting involved with any mud-slinging with his opponents. Jacob then highlighted Glenn's conservative credentials, noting his 98% satisfaction rating from the VCDL. He added that the three things that Glenn understands best are small businesses, Virginia businesses, and Virginia's economy. In addition, while Glenn focuses on the economy, he's no stranger to social issues – such as being a promoter of charter schools and school choice. Jacob said he also had petitions for people to sign, as well as Glenn's literature and his own contact information to share with people. In closing, he gave everyone Glenn's campaign website, which is www.DavisForLG.com. Connie Stevens noted that links to all of our state-wide candidates' websites can be found on our own GCRC website.

Continuing Business and New Business

Because the meeting had already run long, Chairman Yensho chose to take executive action and dispense with these remaining items on the agenda.

Adjournment

With a motion by Steve Morris and a second by Bob Young, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55pm by a unanimous voice vote.

Following the adjournment of our official business meeting, Ed asked Nancy Rodland to briefly talk about her views on signing candidates' petitions. She explained that she believed all of us need to be supportive of all of our candidates in getting on the Primary election ballot. We are so fortunate to live in a country that allows us the freedom of holding open and honest elections; and we should all support that system by signing our candidates' petitions. Otherwise, we wouldn't have options. Nancy then explained some of the requirements imposed on the collection of signatures.

Next, Denver Riggleman addressed our committee on his newly announced candidacy for Governor. He began by telling everyone about himself, noting that he was born in Manassas, VA. He is a veteran of the US Air Force and got a degree in Foreign Affairs from UVA while he was enlisted. He was then made an Intelligence Officer, serving on the Romanian/Serbian border during Operation Allied Force. After the twin towers were hit on 9/11/2001, he was sent overseas and helped plan the first bombing runs into Afghanistan. After additional deployments, he ended up at the NSA, where he was involved with counter-terrorism mission management. In 2007, he started his own company, where he was again involved with counter-terrorism. After topping out at \$17M/yr in 2012, he sold his company; and with his wife, he started Silver Back Distillery in Afton, VA, in 2014. Having started that business, Denver related a long list of distasteful encounters he has had with both government and private entities that infringed on his personal property rights for the 50-acre tract of land he and his wife had purchased for the distillery; and related to his ability to run his business without outside interference. All of those experiences ended up motivating him to get involved in politics and run for Governor. As a result, his campaign is focused on a desire to stop corruption, promotes govt. transparency, streamlining taxes, and dismantling government regulations. Following his remarks, Denver took a number of questions from the audience.