

# MVDDC Committee Meeting Minutes

May 19, 2020

Chair Report

the chair played two videos

Welcome

Using “unanimous consent” for meetings

Motion to accept the minutes: Minutes were approved.

Vote in 1 new member: Maria Buscemi (601 - Belle Haven) Lisa Platt (Newington Forest)

Member Recognition (Rachel Buczynski) Maria Vorel Spoke: While the effort to elect Democrats takes the efforts of us all, each month we take a moment to express our appreciation for the efforts of one. This month we are thanking Rachel Buczynski. Rachel has been serving as the Vice Chair for communications. In doing so, she has updated the website, and invigorated the overall efforts we have taken to elevate our communications. More than that, she has shared good ideas, her organizational skills and jumped in to support many of the efforts of the committee. She is also a Precinct Co-Captain. And while Rachel will still be involved, currently she is transitioning out of the Vice Chair for Communications. Rachel, we thank you for your kindness, wisdom and many talents.

Speakers – The Legal Landscape

Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring – Evictions and Absentee Voting Fairfax

We will need everyone’s help to get democrats elected up and down the ballot, both this year and in 2021. Taking control of the legislature in 2019 was very important—we will need to fight to keep it in 2021. Mark Warner and Don Beyer are working hard in so many ways that we need to get them re-elected. there is a direct relationship to political action and policy change and we need to keep that positive change going. He then reviewed many of the policy initiatives he has championed in the last several years. He is also working to remove the requirement to have a witness signature on absentee ballots, despite GOP opposition. GOP groups are also opposing allowing people to vote absentee due to COVID-19 concerns.

Questions for the VA-AG:

- Beverly B asked the VA-AG if the signature waiver applied to the November elections. He is hoping to have that happen, but it will require the legislature to confirm the change—possibly via a special session.
- Genie M thanked the VA-AG for all of his efforts, and asked about what are the next steps? VA-AG—Getting women equal treatment under the law is one of his top priorities. Some things people can do is get involved in elections, especially in other

states with competitive US Senate races and the presidential election. It will need to be a nationwide effort.

- Sarah asked about a 2nd COVID 19 wave and if one hits, will that allow more mail-in balloting? Again, he's hoping that if there is a Special Legislative Session to deal with COVID issues that they will address this as well.
- Paul K —Mentioned his bill about postage on the absentee ballot postage paid issue. He has folks interested in funding this effort privately—Would that be legal? VA-AG—he is willing to explore that with Paul.
- Chris A asked If there is a special session, what is needed for legislation to take immediate effect? A supermajority? VA-AG—he will look to see what the law requires and what ground rules are in place for the session.

County Commonwealths Attorney Steve Descano – Reforms. Steve thanked us for having him as our guests. His office is in charge of the County's Prosecutors. He is committed to Criminal Justice reform issues, and has been pursuing them. For example, not prosecuting simple marijuana possession and reviewing the issues surrounding cash bail for certain crimes. Representing the people of Fairfax county means all people get equitable treatment. He is also increasing the reporting of data of the activities of the office to be able to identify areas for improvement and to increase transparency. He is also looking to protect both people in the jails and those outside they interact with safe from COVID using a variety of tools and policies.

Questions for the Commonwealth Attorney

- Kate S. Asked what his biggest challenge has been since taking office. CA— Upgrading the philosophy of the office to a more fair, open, and equitable process for criminal justice and criminal justice reform in Fairfax County.
- Kathleen M. Asked for an update on the Bijan Ghaisar case. CA—said he's been pursuing it, but has been stonewalled by both the Park Police and the DOJ who have been obstructing things. In the name of fairness, he is still pursuing things —he had a meeting on this issue this week, in fact.
- Genie M asked about getting someone in his office who works on domestic violence to reach out to her organization—who can she contact? And how many prisoners can be released to do COVID and how many have been? CA —He will put someone in touch with her group offline. As far as prisoner releases, his purview is solely with the Fairfax County Jail.
- Paul J asked if he's been able to collaborate with his new 'allies' with other recently elected CAs. CA—Yes, especially with the association of VA CAs who collaborate on some issues; as far as actual cases within the county the COVID issues have impacted many things.
- Hamid asked what has the CAs office done about judgement equity with different ethnicities convicted of the same crimes. CA—They are working on this issue from several angles. First they are hiring a diverse staff of attorneys to add a variety of

perspectives. He is also working on culture change to have consistent policy application.

- Matt B asked about police shootings and militaristic activities seen elsewhere; What training is occurring with the Police to avoid these violent interactions? CA—He feels it's an important issue to keep attention on. His office is trying to be very transparent when they investigate these situations, and he supports (and participated in) the Public Review committee.
- Satish K asked about Gang Violence issues. CA—They are working to both get kids who are in gangs to get on a better path and to help keep vulnerable kids out of gangs. (lack of opportunity, lack of security, etc are reasons many kids join gangs). Addressing those issues proactively will help reduce the allure of gang participation.
- Dan Storck asked about the opioid crisis and how is the CA's office approaching it? CA—the Drug Courts they have are working to hear cases and he wants to help expand their role. Jail is not a solution to opioid addiction, we need more systemic change, and he wants to help lead that.

Dan Storck addressed the Committee. He complimented Maritza for raising issues about the upcoming elections and showed how the information being provided was changed. His office gets a lot of people who reach out to his office about how to vote and information about changes. The office is working to provide information on COVID and other community issues via email and other social media communications. There is a special meeting of the Supervisors on how to further address the community response to opening up scheduled for next week. The Board has also made adjustments to their budget to reflect increased expenses as well as funds coming to the Board via the CARES Act. Many of the funds will go to help community groups provide food to those who need it. There is also a small business loan program. Lastly, he raised the importance that we need people to respond to the US Census.

## Officer Reports

### Secretary

#### Treasurer Sarah Jernigan

- Budget Kate S. Made a motion to accept the Budget as submitted. Matt B seconded the motion. Motion was passed.
- Treasurer's Report. Sarah demoed her new reporting format that was approved by the ExecComm and provided information on March and April. Kate moved approval of treasurer's report, report was seconded.

#### New Member Outreach Paul Jameson

- Paul has put together a package for new members that goes through how the party is set up, as well as local and state government structures to help folks get oriented.
- New Member Package Presentation

#### Finance — Matt Bell

- Matt put in a plug for the FCDC fundraiser that will be tomorrow night with Terry McAuliffe.

- A direct mail piece will not go out until after the June Primary. Letter is being developed by Matt and Maritza.

#### Precinct Operations —Maria Vorel

The Precinct Operations leadership team is actively working to redesign how we will do precinct operations this year, shifting to a virtual approach which will heavily use phone banking, texting and an increase in a virtual presence. Precinct Captains, please be on the lookout for an email from me in the next few days.

- We are in need of persons to manage phone banks. If you would like to be involved in managing a phone bank or training others to do so, would you please get in touch with me. I am putting my email in the chat [MVViceChairPops@FairfaxDemocrats.org](mailto:MVViceChairPops@FairfaxDemocrats.org) Please reach out to help in phone banking.
- We are also looking for volunteers to help support communications messaging. If you are active on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook or other social media and would be willing to send out messages to increase our presence, please send me your contact information and the social media platform you would help support. Again, my email is [MVViceChairPops@FairfaxDemocrats.org](mailto:MVViceChairPops@FairfaxDemocrats.org)

A final word on volunteer opportunities:

- The Virginia Grassroots Coalition is sponsoring an effort to provide masks and voter registration & mail in ballot information to two health care centers serving low income, high risk populations. They are asking for persons to donate masks or funds to purchase masks.
- The sites are – 1- in our district, the Neighborhood Health Center on Richmond Highway. Their mission is to improve health and advance health equity in Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax by providing high quality primary care regardless of ability to pay. 2—Tuba City Regional Health Care in Tuba City Arizona, serving Native Americans. You can designate which center you would like to receive your donation.
- Persons interested supporting the effort can make or purchase masks, make masks or send funds which will be used to buy masks. For more information, please send an email to [Marianne.VAGrassrootsCoalition@gmail.com](mailto:Marianne.VAGrassrootsCoalition@gmail.com)

#### Events—Lexalynn Hooper

- Mardi Gras went very well—thank you
- Plans for an Ice Cream Social are being developed

#### Communications

#### Technology

#### Outreach —Hamid Munir

#### **Old Business**

meeting attendance—Bryan Graham

- In January new bylaws were passed creating voting memberships and associate (non-voting) memberships. To stay members, you need to attend at least one meeting every 120 days. they are reviewing issues people may have attending meetings and will work with people to help folks remain voting members.

## FCDC Standing Committees

### **New Business**

Remote participation in meeting for when we start meeting in person. Kate S. made a suggestion to start planning ways to allow remote attendance at meetings once we begin meeting in person. Bryan and she will discuss what other committees are considering and bring a firmer proposal to a future meeting.

Zainab Mohsini (candidate running against Congressman Gerry Connolly for June Primary) addressed the group.

### Announcements

May 20 – Conversation with Terry McAuliffe – FCDC Zoom event

May 26 – FCDC Monthly Meeting @ 7:30pm (see FCDC Calendar to Register)

May 26 – UPDATED: Deadline to Register to Vote for June 23 Primary

May 29 – Dump Trump Happy Hour (A Zoom Event) June 23 – Primaries: 11 CD

Gerald E. "Gerry" Connolly vs Zainab M. Mohsini

November 3 – Elect Joe Biden President of the United States