**The Lakewood Democratic Club**

**Minutes of Regular Meeting held on March. 28, 2019**

**Woman’s Club Pavilion at Lakewood Park**

**Erik Meinhardt, President**

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m. by President Erik Meinhardt. The Pledge of Allegiance followed.

Officers present were President Erik Meinhardt, First Vice-President Maureen Dostal, Second Vice-President Mark Schneider, Secretary, Matt Kuhns and Treasurer, Cindy Strebig. The President chaired the meeting. The Secretary took minutes.

APPROVAL of the previous MINUTES of the meeting held on Feb. 28, 2019. (Approved)

RECOGNITION OF NOTABLES –

Officials and candidates for office were recognized. Current officials in attendance: Dan O’Malley, John Litten, Ashley Kilbane, Dale Miller, Meghan George, Tom O’Malley, Ed Favre.

Candidates for 2019 who spoke to the meeting: Jennifer O’Donnell (Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas), Dan O’Malley (Lakewood City Council Ward 4), Jason Schachner (Lakewood City Council Ward 2), Meghan George (Lakewood Mayor), Dale Miller (Cuyahoga County Council), Anton Krieger (North Royalton City Council). Brad Presutto (candidate for Lakewood City Council Ward 2) was also present.

The president recognized, as groups, members of the county party central and executive committees, and new club members.

CLUB BUSINESS –

The president spoke about the committee structure (7:25), and invited members to sign up for committees.

The president also updated the club on executive committee deliberations about endorsements in 2019, and asked for comment.

* Eric Deamer and Emily Christescu spoke against
* Steve Bennett spoke in favor
* Dan O’Malley asked about endorsing in the primary as well as the general, and suggested the club do both or neither
* Brad Presutto asked if the club would hold any endorsement vote after the primary filing deadline (answer: yes)
* The president spoke briefly about what peer groups do
* Jason Schachner asked if primary endorsements would remain in effect automatically for a candidate who advances to the general election
* Ed Favre also questioned this point
* Donna Kolis asked about endorsement vote timing in races where there is no primary
* Chuck Shaughnessy asked what determines if there is a primary

**PROGRAM – Women’s Reproductive Rights**

Introduction of program: The president spoke about the global, current and historical oppression of women’s rights. (7:38 p.m.)

The first vice president introduced members of the panel (7:46):

* Hannah Servedio, Northern Ohio Field Organizer with NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio, and a coordinator of Northeast Ohio’s clinic escort program
* Catrina Otonoga-Shaffer, Preterm’s Outreach and Advocacy Coordinator
* Ashley Underwood manages Patients to Advocates at NARAL
* Greta, a Lakewood resident, local clinic employee, and Patients to Advocates fellow

First Topic: what do your organizations do (7:50 p.m.)

* Servedio: NARAL is an advocacy organization for rights to reproductive choice.
* Otonaga-Shaffer: Preterm is the largest abortion provider in Ohio. We do other things but they are secondary; I am the only government/community relations person at Preterm, e.g.
* Underwood: Patients to Advocates assists women who have had abortions in telling their stories. It is sponsored by NARAL, Preterm, Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, and New Voices for Reproductive Justice.
* Servedio: All of our organizations work closely with one another.

Second Topic: What drew you to what you do (7:55 p.m.)

* Servedio: My early work was in victim services, which led to volunteering for a clinic escort program
* Otonaga-Shaffer: My family were refugees, and their experience inspired me to studies on human rights, which has a lot of overlap with reproductive rights
* Greta: The support I experienced after having an abortion motivated me to provide this for others, as a patient advocate as well as with the separate Patients to Advocates fellowship
* Underwood: I wanted a career in health, and my undergraduate work related to these issues, so I saw a job posting and responded

Third Topic: Define reproductive health/rights/justice (8:00 p.m.)

* Otonaga-Shaffer: Preterm is focused on reproductive health, and within that, on abortion because it is always the most maligned and threatened part of complete reproductive health care
* Servedio: Reproductive rights has been the primary frame for most of these issues since *Roe v. Wade* decision, and primarily concerned with keeping abortion legal. NARAL is a reproductive rights focused organization.
* Underwood: Reproductive justice concerns the right to practical choices to have a child, not have a child, raise a child; the concept is primarily inspired by disparities experienced in the African American community

Fourth topic: What is at stake (8:04 p.m.)

* Otonaga-Shaffer: Abortion terminates a pregnancy. Medically or surgically, it is a safe procedure.
* Greta: Medical abortion is a first-trimester procedure.

Fifth topic: Misconceptions about women who have abortions (8:08 p.m.)

* Greta: Misconceptions that they aren’t good women, haven’t consulted their hearts or thought it through. Also, women often feel that an abortion endangers them, which it does not (when it’s a legal procedure performed by qualified professionals).
* Otonaga-Shaffer: One in four women will have an abortion. Anyone with a uterus can have an abortion. It’s none of someone else’s business whether or when a woman has children. The biggest misconception is that people do not consider the decision thoroughly.
* Servedio: Misconception that “no one likes abortion, everyone regrets their abortion.” One of our interns begins her story with “my abortion saved my life.”
* Underwood: Abortions are sought by people from all socioeconomic backgrounds. Everyone loves someone who has had an abortion.

Sixth topic: What language is important and why (8:13 p.m.)

* Underwood: Abortion is a valid medical procedure. Don’t avoid the term.
* Servedio: Words that are misleading are usually the ones which opponents use the most.
* Otonaga-Shaffer: People who call themselves “pro-life” do not live up to those words, which is why we call them anti-choice.
* Servedio: Some pro-choice people (though not me) even insist that they are truly pro-life.

Seventh topic: What’s the state of legislation (8:19 p.m.)

* Servedio: More than half of the states including Ohio are either preparing to take advantage of, or seeking actively, a court ruling reversing Roe v. Wade. Ohio General Assembly is close to passing an effectively complete abortion ban—called a “heartbeat bill” inaccurately; no heart exists yet at six weeks—and Governor DeWine has committed to signing it.
* Otonaga-Shaffer: Pregnancy is measured from a woman’s last menstrual period, so a six week ban means that even with a very precise cycle which many women do not have, “six weeks” would mean she has missed her period by about 12 days. Ohio already has a ban on abortion before six weeks, also.
* Servedio: Former Governor Kasich signed over 28 abortion restrictions which closed over half Ohio’s clinics; Ohio now has nine left. Current SB27 legislation requires fetal tissue—only from abortions—to be cremated or buried. Clinics offer these options but requiring it in all cases amounts to shaming, and vindictive cost burdening. Proposed HB90 would require a state curriculum on “the humanity of the unborn child” to be posted in bathrooms etc.

Eighth topic: How is this all happening when choice polls at 70% or more (8:28 p.m.)

* Servedio: Anti-choice movement is small but very loud and well organized.
* Underwood: Anti-choice movement has worked on triggering visceral reactions—with no regard for facts—to make the issue stigmatized and make their bills seem moderate.

Ninth topic: Greta, did you face barriers (8:31 p.m.)

* Greta: Yes, but I was also fortunate in the position I was in at that time; six months later I would have faced substantially greater obstacles. Women I speak with tell harrowing stories. Required waiting period necessitates multiple appointments to create barriers.
* Underwood: Most insurance and other forms of health coverage do not pay for abortion. A first trimester abortion at Preterm costs about $440. Ohio forces women to examine inaccurate “information” before having an abortion. None of these requirements are in place for any other procedure. A 24-hour delay does not change a decision someone spent much time thinking about, it just punishes. Average age of abortion client is 27, and most have at least one child.
* Servedio: Some barriers are also literal, such as the people who carry out harassment outside of abortion clinics. They are getting more aggressive about disregarding the law. This is why I am a clinic escort.

Tenth topic: Crisis pregnancy centers (8:40 p.m.)

* Underwood: These are fake clinics, which nonetheless receive state funding, typically have no medical professionals on staff and only function to deceive people. At least 180 operate in Ohio.
* Otonaga-Shaffer: Preterm and Planned Parenthood are the only abortion providers left in Ohio.

Closing topic: Actions to take (8:44 p.m.)

Otonaga-Shaffer: Preterm’s Bowlathon fundraiser is happening now.

Servedio: Write a letter to the editor, we have resources on the NARAL blog; sign up with NARAL and we will provide other ways to help; contact me to become a clinic escort.

The president invited members to socialize at Sauced Taproom after the meeting; and introduced Kyle Bauer who spoke briefly about the Represent.Us organization.

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING – April 25, 2019.

ADJOURNMENT – Unofficially adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Matt Kuhns, Secretary on March 29, 2019.

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Secretary Approval: sign date

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President Approval: sign date