**The Lakewood Democratic Club**

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

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

**Erik Meinhardt, President**

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 7:04 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 Jan 31, 2019. (Approved)

RECOGNITION OF NOTABLES –

Officials and candidates for office were recognized. Current officials in attendance: Emma Petrie-Barcelona, Meghan George, Tom O’Malley, Dan O’Malley, Tristan Rader, Sam O’Leary, Chris Glassburn.

Candidates for 2019 who spoke to the meeting: Brad Presutto (Lakewood City Council Ward 2), Laura Rodriguez-Carbone (Lakewood City Council Ward 1), Anton Krieger (North Royalton City Council), Sam O’Leary (Lakewood Mayor), Lisa Forbes (Appeals Court), Gayle Williams-Byers (Appeals Court). Dan O’Malley is also running for reelection to Lakewood City Council (Ward 4).

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

NOTES – The president invited attendees to Sauced Taproom after the meeting, and sought the owner of a reusable aluminum bottle left at the last meeting.

**PROGRAM – Black History Month Panel Discussion**

Introduction of program: The president spoke about local segregation, and hostility faced by minorities, and a duty of outreach and support, as both individuals and an organization. The president then introduced the panel’s moderator, Gabrielle Jackson, President of Northeast Ohio Young Black Democrats.

Introduction of panel (7:31 p.m.): Jackson introduced members of the panel:

* State Senator Sandra Williams, 21st Ohio Senate District
* Troy Greenfield, Fairview Park Democratic city leader and club president, and Cuyahoga County Democratic Party vice-chair
* Judge Gayle Williams-Byers, South Euclid Municipal Court
* Kahlil Seren, Cleveland Heights City Council

Opening statements by panel members: panelists described their backgrounds and entrance into politics, and issues with race which overlapped.

First Topic: Policies which disproportionately affect the African American community (8:02 p.m.)

* Williams: education, criminal justice, entrepreneurship, healthcare, affordable housing
* Greenfield: basic representation in rooms where decisions are made
* Williams-Byers: education, gerrymandering
* Seren: historic disparities such as the wealth gap, expectations, budgets; Seren contrasted the need for lead-free housing with the public expenditure on sports stadiums

Audience question about Seren’s aside that his comment might upset employers at the county: Seren clarified that they would likely not be upset, but would disagree on some points; emphasizes that he does not characterize them as uncaring about the issue.

Audience question about how to be supportive when people are sensitive to suggestions that they are not doing the right thing already:

* Greenfield: CLASH coalition is advocating for lead-safe housing in Cleveland, and west-siders e.g. can support activities like this
* Williams: Some times feelings will be hurt by things which need to be discussed, and bringing them up for discussion anyway is the right thing to do

Second Topic: Infant mortality rates are measurably higher for minorities, even distinct from income gaps

* Williams: describes related legislation she has worked on, and notes that this problem is particularly severe in Cuyahoga County
* Jackson and Williams note that the county is home to highly regarded healthcare facilities, but access to them is a point of disparity
* Williams-Byers: concurs on importance of access to healthcare, and remarks on how this relates to drug-issue disparities; notes that opioid crisis, which has been relatively detached from African American populations, has roots in prescription medication to which those populations have less access
* Williams: observations about the disparity in decades of American views and policies on drug abuse; says that drug sentencing laws are unfair; adds that even changes she was part of in the legislature were unequal in impact
* Williams-Byers: policy overlaps with the impact on people’s lives

Third Topic: Policing (8:38 p.m.)

* Williams-Byers: Limited minority representation on police diminishes perspective, perpetuates ignorance; communities of color have lost faith in law-enforcement
* Williams: Concurs, adds that preemption of government hiring residency requirements has been counterproductive in this area

Closing statements: the current political climate, and calls to action

* Greenfield: Political climate is “effed up”; stay active and involved
* Williams: Concurs; comments on the competing needs for change and continuity among elected representatives; need of working together
* Williams-Byers: Expand your circle of diversity (Jackson adds “not just during election year”), then nurture those relationships; don’t assume that e.g. articulacy is remarkable from African Americans; read *Just Mercy* and *The Warmth of Other Suns*
* Seren: Political climate is damaging; recounts different responses by Cleveland Heights city council to a black female council president and a white male council president who had similar approaches; importance of admitting to ourselves our biases

Audience question about how to talk about these things further; Jackson recommends doing it, people who need to hear more about them may pay more notice when said by someone who looks like them.

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING – March. 28, 2019.

ADJOURNMENT – moved, seconded, adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Matt Kuhns, Secretary on March 3, 2019.

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Secretary Approval: sign date

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President Approval: sign date