



January 9, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:05 by chair Ralph Dennis. A quorum was met with seven committee members attending: Ralph Dennis, June Mejia, Phyllis Dubois, Steve Young, Craig Snider, Kathy Kerridge, and Kari Birdseye. Approximately 42 people attended the meeting.

Attending: 42

Treasurer's Report: Kathy Kerridge reported that \$837.54 is in the bank, after payments of \$100 for room rental and \$200 for a table at the Solano Dem Crab Feed. A \$210 deposit made in January.

Meeting Minutes for November and December were available. Voting on approval of minutes with the addition of January will occur at February's meeting.

Acknowledgements:

- Guest officials attending: Steve Young, vice-mayor of Benicia; Dan Smith, former council member; and Christina Strawbridge, former City Council member
- There were no representatives from Benicia Indivisible for Justice or the Carquinez Resistance Project.

Business: Ralph Dennis gave the background of PDB and explained that one important role of the organization is to invited candidates for local and state offices to speak. Tonight's speaker is Gayle McLaughlin, candidate for Lt. Gov.

Andres Soto introduced Gayle, the former mayor of Richmond.

- Former Richmond City Council member
- Two-term mayor
- One of the founders of Richmond Progressive Alliance, created in 2003 following the Chevron fire.

- RPA has been successful because members decided to run for office themselves after determining that their elected officials weren't representing them. Since then, they have run at least two candidates to run for office. They now have a super majority on city council.
- Andres supports Gayle because she has shown time and time again that she is committed to her values. She was instrumental in breaking the stranglehold that Chevron had on Richmond. Gayle started out as Green Party member but now is running as no-party preference.

Gayle McLaughlin: Gayle talked about the founding of the Richmond Progressive Alliance which was formed by different activist groups to address homelessness, poverty, environmental issues and the overwhelming influence of Chevron. She talked of community concerns not being heard and said that when RPA was founded, all of city council was in hands of Chevron. "We decided to be the leaders we had been waiting for," she said.

RPA realized that an on-going, permanent alliance was needed. She was elected and two years later ran for mayor. After two terms, she then went back on city council. Chevron spent \$3.5 million to try to defeat her last campaign. However, all the progressives won and all the Chevron candidates lost. In 2014, during her last year as mayor, Bernie Sanders came to town and endorsed her, citing that what Richmond has is what every community needed: a strong grassroots alliance.

Some of the changes made through the work of RPA:

- Changed the political composition of city council,
- Broke the stranglehold that Chevron had on the city
- Raised the minimum wage to \$15;
- Joined Marin Clean Energy
- In affordable housing, RPA spearheaded an innovative foreclosure program in which Richmond took over the mortgages from banks. The program garnered national attention but was stopped by Congress which passed a bill that any city that took over the mortgages couldn't get insurance, so Richmond had to back off. The banks felt the pressure and loosened their mortgage policy.
- Founded Richmond as Sanctuary city
- Sued Trump for his policy
- Sued Chevron for its negative, willful neglect of their refinery and the resulting 2012 fire which, sent 15,000 local people to hospital. Got the community to raise their voices with environmental, health and safety and social justice groups joining in the lawsuit
- Took a stand against charter schools as well as the privatization of prisons

She told how she would shape the role of Lt. Governor.

- Encourage people to come together locally to make a difference as Richmond did. She's already encouraging California cities to form alliances like Richmond's RPA, giving talks across the state about how they did it. As a result, about 6-7 alliances have already developed: San Diego, LA, SF, Berkeley, Pinole, Pacifica, and more that are just starting to take shape.
- Build local movements, but then connect progressive groups throughout the state to create a force, a voice that resonates, and a political power.

- Encourage groups to run corporate-free candidates to keep corporations out of our local politics. She cited a time in Richmond when a Chevron employee had a desk outside of city manager's office and the company gave workshops on how to run city hall.
- Pass Single payer health insurance.
- Free public college
- To pay for such programs, she would advocate the taxation of the 1 percent with Prop 13 reform; that would bring in \$9 billion annually,
- Promote a millionaire's tax
- Promote an oil extraction tax – she doesn't want any more oil extraction but CA is the only state that doesn't tax extraction. Such a tax would discourage the oil companies to extract. Each year, the tax would rise higher. She would use this tax money to solarize the entire state.
- Formation of a statewide public bank whose mission would be for the public good rather than for profit; North Dakota has had a public bank for decades,
- Put in place incentives for affordable housing
- Address election integrity by installing transparent software,
- Defend unions
- Full implementation of CA as a sanctuary state
- Create an office for homelessness,
- Set up a shadow cabinet of advisors

Gayle has the endorsement of 30 Revolution groups which were set up by Bernie Sanders, more than any other candidate in any other state, green party locals;

Q&A

- Why are you running as no party preference? She sees that as a way to build a big tent. She also is running corporate free which is critically important. We have a right to run our electoral process.
- How has the #MeToo movement had an impact on your campaign? She responded that she has been an activist in women's issues since a teen including fighting for equal pay, passage of the Equal Rights Amendment and reproductive rights. We've made some gains along the years but a long way to go. It is a time that is ripe for organizing. Get more women into decision-making roles in all fields. Determine what policy changes need to happen. As Lt. Governor, I will be President of the Senate and will have influence in seeing that through.
- How did you get Chevron to fund \$100 million for Richmond? In 2008, we put forward a tax measure for large corporations. By that time, the RPA had enough clout that it passed. Chevron would have to pay \$10 million a year in taxes in perpetuity. They took us to court and won, but we went forward with another tax measure, Measure T. Eventually, they agreed to negotiate. Settled on \$100 million spread over 15 years to 2025. (What was the amount?)
- Isn't it time to fix inequality of Prop 13? I'm taking the side of homeowners. They are still suffering. We need to get the corporate loophole fixed. If so, \$9 billion would come into the state every year.

- How will you use the Lt. Governor's office to its greatest advantage? As President of the Senate, I will have a vote but only to break a tie. I will step in if the Governor is out of town or has to step down for some reason. My primary role, however, will be to sit on variety of boards and commissions that do critical work such as the UC board of regents, coastal commission, economic development commission, and the emergency preparedness commission, among others. I would use these seats in a way not done in the past, as I did with Richmond City Council. I would use these positions to mobilize communities, to build a movement.
- As chair of Benicia's planning commission, I'm very concerned about affordable housing. What did Richmond experience? What would you do as Lt. Governor? I will address issues such as density around public transit, sustainability, look at issues such as luxury taxes on new development, regulations, and the 15% affordable housing mandate in new developments, and the definition of affordable housing. People still can't afford the affordable housing. What is the income level that people have to make to live in those units?
- Richmond passed an Industrial Safety Ordinance many years ago. We are in the process of doing that in Benicia. Do you have any suggestions for us? The ISO was passed before I was mayor, but, after the fire, the Chemical Safety board came to town and made a number of recommendations to strengthen our ISO. Mayor Patterson added that Richmond has been very helpful, providing information and being part of a panel discussion.
- We are a Democratic club, but we've had spirited discussions about how to support candidates both within and outside the party. I support the good fight, although I choose to stay outside the two-party system because I think we can unite more groups, give the green party and alliances more of a voice. I encourage you to start a Benicia Progressive Alliance. We have a video to help you.

Announcements/Wrap Up

- Women's Marches to be held Saturday, January 20 in various locations including Oakland, SF, Walnut Creek, Vallejo, and Sacramento
- Steve Young/Ralph Dennis: CA-10 Congressional District – discussion about supporting one of Democratic Primary candidates. Steve and Ralph attended the debate in Modesto among candidates running for District 10. This is the closest "flippable" house seat to Benicia. The debate had an overflow crowd of about 400 people.

Question to membership: when started PDB, we said we'd focus on electoral, flipping house seats. Do we have people who are willing to go to Modesto or Tracy to stand in a mall, sign up voters? If we can say that, we might get two or three of these candidates come to us and we hear from them. Do we select a candidate to work for now or do we wait until primary over and a District 10 candidate selected?

Mary Francis Poh said that we can't go against candidate endorsed by central committee. Steve responded that the Central Committee is thinking of changing this, so any club can endorse any candidate. The group voted to wait to see which candidate emerges. It was suggested that we follow up with Modesto to see the outcome. And it was noted that members can still go as individuals to help sign up voters.

- Benicia ISO – Next steps : Using the Contra Costa ISO as a model, the effort is to have an ISO in place in Benicia. PDB is a co-sponsor of that effort, meeting regularly identifying strategies. Not sure when it will happen, but sometime this year. Trying to get word out about importance of ISO, what it is, why we need it; a draft being developed by the group, still being worked on; R would hope comes out in next 60 days; Biggest effort so far is the public meeting on Nov. 14, panel of experts to answer questions

Ralph gave an overview of the ISO effort which began as a response to the fire at Valero on May 5, 2017. The community was not informed of the situation and still has not seen a full report. Generally there are two components of a proposed ISO: a CA-OSHA worker safety component and a CA-EPA public safety component. Those two general provisions are in place at a statewide level now. We would add a public monitoring component and a reporting requirement, neither of which are included in the state regulation. Valero says that Benicia doesn't need it because it duplicates the state regulations. But the lack of any public monitoring or reporting to the city is troublesome. Andres added that there are only 14 inspectors for the whole state, that we have to protect ourselves. He said that, in Contra Costa, it was the steelworkers who pushed for an ISO because they were getting hurt. The push didn't come from the environmental groups.

Question: what are the next steps? It is not happening very quickly. Mayor told her to call city council, to made public comment at CC meetings. Steve Young responded that, at this stage, all the efforts are through volunteers and trying to raise awareness. We have to build the case, and we have to get at least one more vote on City Council to even get staff to work on it.

Question: What would it cost Valero to comply? Steve responded that the city would probably contract with Contra Cost. The cost hasn't been determined.

- PDB needs help on several committee: Endorsement committee, web site development, education
- Next meetings: February 13, Benicia Library, 7:00, Featured Speaker – Attorney General Xavier Becerra;
March 13 – invites have been issued to Delaine Easton, John Chiang, and Kevin De Leon

Adjourned at 8:45 p.m.