

Minutes – February 11, 2009
34th Legislative District Democrats
Business Meeting

7:11 PM (Technical difficulties delay the start of the meeting) – Meeting called to order, flag salute led by First Vice Chair, Kim Becklund.

Minutes from the previous meeting are adopted with a unanimous vote.

Agenda adopted by the body with a unanimous vote.

Chair postpones the Treasurers report to next month's meeting

Chair's Report

Nick Licata will not be joining the meeting tonight, because there has already been resolution on his topic.

Sherril Huff was elected King County Elections Officer. She won "big," due, in large part, to local legislative district mobilization.

This Monday is Legislative Action Day, Feb 16, many members are signing up. Greg Doss is passing out signup sheet. Chair describes the LAD's agenda.

King County Executive , Ron Sims is going to DC, as Deputy Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. New process is described. Ron Sims wants a caretaker Executive . KC Council will assess what they want to do, but are leaning towards caretaker approach.

A strategic summit is being put together on Feb 22nd from 1 – 5 p.m. at the Southwest Library. More information is available on the website.

The 34th LD has received an anonymous donation to send two people to Camp Wellstone. If you would like to be considered for scholarship, information is available on the website. Camp Wellstone will take place April 24 – 26.

First Vice Chair Report

Delridge Neighborhood Development Association (DNDA) is recruiting board members. First Vice Chair gives an introduction and background for Suzanne Nevan and the DNDA. She encourages everyone to take a look at the website, www.dnda.org and get involved.

Nevan talks about the Food and Fitness initiative. The Kellogg Foundation funds the Food and Fitness Initiative. There are two meetings coming up to discuss strategies to get access to healthy food and also to help encourage exercise. The first one is on March 23 at Youngstown or Chief Sealth, the location is still to be determined. This

meeting is should be about 60 – 70 people strategizing together to come up with ideas on how to get food and fitness to the community.

7:25 Chair introduces Seattle City Council members; Sally Clark and Bruce Harrell.

Clark comes to speak first. Clark chairs the Planning, Land Use, and Neighborhoods Committee. The main item for W. Seattle right now is the multifamily code. Multifamily code relates directly to duplexes to high rises in terms of construction and design. It arrived three weeks ago, and they are currently tasked with trying to figure out how to make it sustainable for the W. Seattle communities.

Another item on their agenda is the south downtown livability study for the International District, which should come to the Council at the end of the first quarter 2009.

The budget will also consume most of the council's attention. Clark asks for support from the 34th LD, as Seattle revenues are "declining precipitously as we close 2009." In Nov. 2008, \$25 million was trimmed from the city budget for 2009. Revenues are expected to continue to decline, and this will be a big problem for rebalancing the budget in Oct/Nov 2009, they will be coming back out to talk to all of us then to let us know what is happening.

Questions

Will any of the federal Economic Stimulus Package money be able to help?

Clark: We will see what comes out. There was some money that did not make it through for public health.

Where does neighborhood planning for W. Seattle stand right now?

Clark: Neighborhood plan updates include trying to figure out how to keep the neighborhood plans moving. Rainier Valley, Beacon Hill and light rail have all been deferred to the Neighborhood Planning Advisory committee. There is a strong argument regarding bus routes coming through W. Seattle.

Why has the Seattle City Council chosen to remove their bid to annex White Center?

Clark: Seattle wanted access to tax money related to annexing White Center, but was voted down. As of now, Seattle is looking at a southern boundary of Roxbury for annexation.

Why wouldn't Seattle get access to the sales tax monies?

Clark: There were a number of deals made, but Seattle was not given access to that money.

Will Seattle annex the South Park area?

Clark: South Park is another issue because we cannot receive South Park in its current condition. They need to resolve the issue of who is paying for the bridge.

Chair introduces Bruce Harrell

Harrell comes to the front to speak. He thanks body for the 34th LD's endorsement. Harrell chairs the Energy and Technology Committee. City Light rates kept low and same with no increase. There is an issue as there are \$2 billion worth of capital improvement plans, but revenues only equal \$1 million. Work plan is what gets into the rate base. He continues to strive to keep rates low without sacrificing reliability.

He wants to take the fiscal responsibility described for City Light and apply it to the Seattle city budget. Harrell discusses how initiatives get to him.

As for the technology part of this committee, Bill Schrier is a technologist expert that has been working with Harrell. He wants Seattle to think smartly about technology. He describes the process of gathering better and more reliable information from constituents. E-mails and lobbyists currently count for only 1 – 2% of opinion, yet they get listened to the most because they are in front of him and he can react to them. His idea is to give every citizen a password protected account to the City where Council members can get direct feedback from citizens. He called it the "Citizen Engagement Portal." The idea is to capture the silent majority. Bill Schrier is running this technology.

City Light is just trying to keep up with the issues, environment and HR. Harell's goal for City Light is to turn it into an economic generator, with good business practices and good jobs.

One question: Are people in Ponderay County upset about low pay? And do solar panels on roofs affect the City Light rate?

Ponderay has a dam and City Light has to pay an impact stipend of \$1 million annually, but they want \$3 million. Ponderay is a depressed area. City Light is trying to treat them fairly. They think City Light is very profitable, but it is not profitable. City Light also wants to make sure that payments made for the use the damn are tied to community impact.

Solar panels affect the rates. City Light encourages people to get off the grid, but is limited in what City Light can do to assist people. Solar panels will take down your bill. It benefits the user and the utility. It is an economic benefit to the user and the City.

No more time for questions.

7:49 Chair takes the mike. Introduces Greg Doss and Joe McDermott for a Legislative Update.

Greg speaks first and requests no questions. Doss defines the two elements that make up the LAC. LAC is the voice to be heard in Olympia and to use your voices to get bills passed for legislators. Please volunteer. Cut off dates are coming next month. He highlights the good work representatives of the 34th LD are doing and passed out a document with a list of bills sponsored by those representatives and a website to access a high level summary of the state budget.

There is a \$5 billion budget gap. There are some strong cuts. \$1 billion is coming from the Economic Stimulus Package, but there will still be cuts in education, health, and a suspension of teacher raises. The basic health plan will be reduced by 40%, 13 state parks will be closed.

Next step beyond the committee is the Legislative Action Day, Doss wants to get a group of 34th LD members together to hear a proposal from the governor's staff. They will explain more about the budget decisions.

Marcee Stone comes up to speak. She encourages people to go to LAD, then begins speaking about the State Supreme Court Fair Elections Act. Marco Lias and John King have taken lead roles on this legislation. In the Senate it is bill S5912, with 33 sponsors, including all of the 34th District legislators. In 2004, \$4 million dollars was spent on judiciary elections. Marcee explains the necessity of such legislation with an example from West Virginia, where a small coal company sued a larger coal company. The courts sides with the smaller company and by the time litigation had reached the state's Supreme Court level, the larger company had fines upwards of \$80 million. The CEO injected \$3 million into one campaign and that judge over turned fine as the deciding vote. There is a case now in front of the US Supreme Court regarding whether or not judges should recuses themselves when there is a conflict of interest. She ended by reemphasizing the importance of such legislation to the fairness of our government.

It is now Sen. McDermott's turn to speak. He congratulates the newly elected Executive Board. House and Senate are still working on their respective bills. He explains the process of bills moving through State Legislature prior to final voting. He also emphasizes that many committee chairs are only allowing bills with very limited to no budgetary requirements out of committee. The reason for this is that the state has a budget gap of \$5 billion out of a budget of \$33 billion.

Same Sex Legislation – One bill that is having a difficult time is same sex legislation, which affords all the rights of marriage without the word “marriage.” The reason for this difficulty is primarily centered on the issue of partners' right to access pension funds should one partner or the other pass. There is cost involved in this, and the provision of pensions is being delayed.

Disability Assistance – The General Assistance Unemployable (GAU) and the GUX, \$300 plus per month of health care assistance for disabled people that cannot work are in peril. Effectively the funding for the GUX has ended and the program will not

be renewed in the next budget. Right now the legislators are trying to find funding for GAU, but it will be limited.

Unemployment – The Senate will look at the Unemployment Bill on Thursday, Feb. 12. Unemployment in the state is up by 92%. People are having difficulty getting through online and by telephone to log their hours for unemployment. This bill will increase the overall benefits by \$45 a week.

Education – Education funding is a major piece of work right now. The Funding Task Force is now redefining what basic education is and has sent legislation to the floor with this redefinition. The importance of this is that the definition of “basic education” determines funding, per the state Constitution. Another task force has completed its version of this legislation as well. Both bills are on the floor. Sen. McDermott sponsors the one from the task force.

Elections issues – The states Legislators are looking at changing the voter registration rules so that the deadline to register to vote will be moved from 15 days prior to Election Day to the Monday before Election Day. Sam Hunt is introducing a bill on this. There is also work on legislation to encourage states in the Pacific Northwest to have their Electoral College members vote for whoever wins the popular vote in the national election.

Questions

Leslie Harris – With these education bills and the \$5 billion gap in the state budget, is education reform really going to happen?

McDermott – With one lawsuit pending and two competing bills on funding, McDermott is concerned that nothing will get through this session. His strongest concern is that there is no funding source for the bill brought about by the Funding Task Force. If Chair took out the funding source, it would stand a very small “change in heck.”

34th Member – I am going to go to my PTA and motivate them, do you have a message should bring along?

McDermott – It doesn’t matter, because whatever definition set up for “basic education” will result in a lawsuit and would not be funded completely. A way needs to be found to update the definition of “basic education” as well as a way to fund that over time.

Same 34th Member – How do I convince [PTA members] to take the time to call their legislator?

McDermott – If they do not call, then we will be inadequately funding schools for the next 30 years. He gave an example of the need for public education, by citing a

speech by Bill Gates Sr. speech excepting the state's Metal of Merritt in Olympia that day (Feb. 11, 2009).

Ivan Weiss – In addition to lobby day on Monday and the representatives of various ferry communities descending on Olympia on the 18th, can we have a list of all the senators that we need to contact to stave off cuts to the ferry system?

McDermott – Talk to everyone on the Transportation Committee.

David Ginsberg – He is concerned about S5522, which sets up a pilot project for Internet voting for overseas military personnel. He asks Sen. McDermott to explain this.

McDermott – There is a real need to have an option which allows overseas military personnel to get their votes back in time to be counted. There is a national program that started four years ago, which was pulled for security, but we are still looking into it as a possibility here in Washington State.

David Ginsberg states his objections to this, as there is no way to secure the vote. He agrees with the idea but not the method.

34th Member – Why don't you take a lead on reforming the campaign finance system and working system? Use a European model for 45 days and a national holiday so everyone can vote.

McDermott – He thinks voter participation will increase due to the new mail-in ballots. It isn't practical to constrict campaigns to 45 days, because that would infringe of freedom of speech. With regards to voter accountability, he would argue that he is providing leadership.

Dow Constantine comes into the meeting; Sen. McDermott offers him the microphone, as Constantine has just come for a King County Council Meeting regarding KC Executive Ron Sims' departure. Constantine declines.

Richard Bartlett – When is the state going to try and recoup [the budget gap] through taxes?

McDermott - Revenue forecast comes out and it is going to be getting worse. Those numbers are looking at \$7 billion. At that point in time, we will have to find a new revenue source. The governor may not sign legislation, including new taxes provisions. He asks that if this comes to a vote, that we not demonize those Representatives that do not come from solid districts, because they may not be able to support it. Ultimately, new taxes may have to be put on the ballot. At such a time, the 34th will be asked to help with grass roots for this.

8:26 Sen. McDermott closes and offers the microphone to the Chair. Chair, again reinforces the need for members to attend Legislative Action Day, before moving on.

Chair reintroduces the need to approve standing committee chairs. He explains the issue with the by-laws (detailed in the Executive Board Minutes from Jan. 12) Committee Chairs come to the front the room. Chair requests that they be approved as a slate. Introduces: Greg Doss – Legislative Action Committee, Jackie Dupras – Newsletter Committee, Les Treall – Outreach Committee, Walter (not present) – Finance Committee, Brian Earl – Bylaws Committee, Jeff Upthegrove – Members Committee, Richard Bartlett – Hospitality Committee, Beth Grieser – Program Committee, Christi Stapleton – Communications Committee, and Kimber McCreery – PCO Committee. Moved, seconded, and unanimously approval.

Chair states that some chairs have set up meetings, Treall, Outreach, is Tues, Feb. 17 at 7 p.m. at his house and Upthegrove, membership is Feb. 15 at the Salvadorian Bakery at 4 p.m. He also reminds everyone that the Strategic Summit will take place at the Southwest Library on Feb. 22.

State Committee Man and Woman reports:

Chris Porter speaks first. Submitted his comments to about chair vote. Noted that Goldmark made a great speech. The rest of the time was spent going from committee to committee. The Workers Privacy Act, co-sponsored by all of the 34th District Representatives is highly supported, but it is still under debate.

Stone speaks second. She will be on the Resolutions Committee. She printed all five of the resolutions and has copies for those that want them at the back of the hall. She requests that those who wish to bring resolutions to committee, that they include a statement of action for the committee to take. Adds some comments to her previous remarks about the Judiciary bill, there will be a hearing after the cut off date in Sam Hunts' committee. She will let the body know when this will take place.

Porter adds to his comments by stating that Noonan gave the Key Note Speech, and BIAW will be back in 2010, which means we will have a huge fight on our hands.

8:39 Constantine is given time to talk by the Chair. He reports on the King County Council Townhall Meeting. He also reports record budget shortfalls and cuts to come on top of cuts from last year. He also states that KC Executive, Ron Sims is leaving for the Obama Administration, leading Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Constantine will keep everyone informed about whether he will seek the office of the Executive. (Chair and other members, "Do it!") Constantine continues, reporting on his trip to Washington D.C. Rep. Norm Dicks is focused on the King County. Rep. Dave Reichert came, listened and said that he is willing to work with Democrats in the House.

8:43 Chair takes mike and requests from the floor topics of old business or new business.

Allan Monro presents a resolution that would rename the West Seattle Bridge after Jeanette Williams, and motions to have the resolution posted in the 34th District

newsletter. He would also like to have the body vote on support for the resolution at the March Business meeting.

Ann Martin adds a point of order, and is recognized by the Chair. Procedurally, resolutions need to go through the Executive Board. The Executive Board then decides whether it should be brought to the body for a vote of support. This body does not vote on it at this time.

Chair states that the resolution will be added to the Executive Board meeting agenda for next Wednesday, Feb. 18. Chair makes an executive decision to add it to the newsletter.

Chair requests that the body vote on whether or not to give \$2,034 dollars to King County Committee in support. Motion moved and seconded. Weiss speaks for the motion. We gave money last year; we should give money again this year. No speakers against the motion. Point of information from the floor, was there not another contribution made? This would set the bar. The Chair recognized Monro. He wants to do this after the treasury report. Chair turns the mike over to Stuart Yarfitz, Treasurer. Yarfitz states current coffers are roughly \$20,000 with no major outstanding obligations. Question called. Passes with one vote against.

No new business, moving on to good of the order.

Krista Comontin from Vote Clean Seattle talks about the Kick Off Event flier, with Jim McDermott as speaker.

Keith Weir speaks on behalf of the Teamsters regarding the Harvard Freight Lines strike.

Chair interrupts to do PCO appointments: Rebecca Wells and Annie Phillips. Wells will be an Acting PCO. PCO appointments are moved, seconded and unanimously approved.

Back to Good of the Order: Ann Martin speaks about the Stock Water bill regarding small farmers using their daily allotment of water usage. Then she talks about the First BBQ of the Season for Greg Nickels, the last weekend in February.

Stacie Anderson introduces herself as the new Political Director for Adam Smith. She lives in 34th. Stacie@adamsmith.com. She invites everyone to a Townhall meeting in Kent.

Porter speaks about a protest on Feb 13th at Rite Aide on Rainier Ave against Rite Aid's action against their workers to form unions.

Chair requests help to clean up.

8:59 Adjourned.