**The Lakewood Democratic Club**

**Minutes of Regular Meeting held March 30, 2023
Lakewood Women’s Pavilion**

**CALL TO ORDER**: The meeting was called to order at 7:06pm by President Erik Meinhart. Officers present were First Vice-President Maureen Dostal, Second Vice-President Jeff Pigott, Treasurer Catie McMahon and Secretary Nicole Parke. The President chaired the meeting. The Secretary took notes.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Club said the Pledge of Allegiance together.

**APPROVAL of the MINUTES**: The body approved the minutes from the February 23, 2023 meeting. Betsy moved. Karolyn seconds.

**HOUSEKEEPING:** Meeting at Sauced after the meeting to socialize. Celebrate Trump being indicted today!

**RECOGNITION OF NOTABLES -** Lakewood School Board President Mike Callahan, Lakewood Municipal Court Judge Tess Neff, Lakewood City Councilperson Jason Shachner, CCDP Exec Director & City Leader Karolyn Isenhart, County Prosecutor Mike O’Malley, Lakewood School Board member Nora Katzenberger, Cuyahoga County Councilperson Dale Miller, Lakewood School Board Member Emma Petrie Barcelona, Lakewood School Board member Betsy Shaugnessy, Judge Thomas O’Malley

Mike O’Malleyl: Want to talk about county jail. Comes back to accountability, & stability. Currently no accountability. Currently on 3rd sheriff in our county this year. County entity responsible for 1600-1700 people / day. We’ve had revolving door of sheriffs. Lack of accountability. 4 years ago, in period of 12 months had 11 prisoners die. 50 lawsuits filed against Cuyahoga County that my office has to handle. Paid out millions. 25 resolved, 25 to go. Need to bring accountability back to office. Same electorate that puts me in office should put county sheriff in office. 12 years into this charter. Have to do better. 4 years ago public defender Mark Stanton and I went before County Council and said this isnt working.

**CANDIDATES: For first hello, say a few words, up to 3 minutes.**

Joy Kennedy - Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas

Kira Krivosh - Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas

Carl Mazzone - Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas

Ray Tarasuck - Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas

Fallon Radigan - Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas

Fallon Kilbane McNally - Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas

Cindy Strebig - announcing candidacy for Ward 3 Lakewood City Council! John Litten has decided not to run for reelection. Endorsing me. Older married lesbian. Originally from North Ridgeville. Lived in Lakewood 25 years. 23 years business owner & landlord. Concerned about safety, housing, physical, mental & emotional health.

Grant Mackay - Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas. Shoutout to State Reps. I’m dealing with two class action lawsuits regarding train derailments. State reps supported letter declaring state of emergency. After visiting East Palestine, I had pounding headache that ibuprofen could not fix.

John Spellacy - Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas

Molly Murphy - Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:** Erica Duce

**CLUB BUSINESS:** N/a

**PROGRAM: WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH**

**Troy Greenfield, Protect Choice Ohio -** If anyone hasn’t signed petition yet, please sign it with me tonight.

I am Regional Field Organizer for west Cuyahoga County, Medina & Lorain counties.

Introducing **Dr. Nancy Li** - Family Medicine doctor in community health center by day; in free time working on this with Ohio Physicians for Reproductive Rights. Group started with humble beginnings. After Dobbs, frustrated that we have to deal with politics in exam room. Group of doctors got together online to write something to publish to Ohioans, patients. Spread quickly without much effort! Gathered 1100 signatures from physicians across Ohio. [Published in Columbus Dispatch](https://www.dispatch.com/story/opinion/letters/2022/07/15/attorney-general-dave-yosts-comments-raped-10-year-old-ohio-girl-who-got-abortion-ignorant-abortion/10066520002/?fbclid=IwAR2XANNbXUMdMCFaQd44kIYmQERLhVV_TqPq7nliX04SfL1p6U2U2vcp-T4). Leadership of OPRR realized this was something special. Quickly mobilized, turned into 501c4, & Ballot Issue PAC. Excited to see so many people volunteering! First Monday after Dobbs, case worker was accompanying patient to health center; pulled me aside to discuss a new client who was single mom, pregnant, could not afford to have baby. I could see that the underserved individuals I chose to devote my career would be the most disproportionately affected. Launched Protect Choice Ohio to work towards constitutional amendment.

Group is so much more than Dr. Li making it out to be. Four dynamic incredible women doctors saw that we were in medical crisis, came together for this cause. Four women for women. Stepped up! To maintain privacy of an individual to make a decision about their bodies and their life. Doctors seeing impact of this on day to day basis. Because they stepped forward, we are now collecting signatures for this ballot initiative. Without them would not be able to support a bill like this! We WILL succeed! Will be on ballot in November 2023! We can do this together. Jeff will be collecting signatures at roller derby saturday! Lots of petition drive thrus coming up! WE have many opportunities to volunteer, etc. Go to [Protectchoiceohio.com](https://protectchoiceohio.com/). We have one doctor, dermatologist, who prescribes skin treatment that is fatal to fetuses. Has to make sure patients not getting pregnant.

Q: Glenn - Lots of effort here in Cuyahoga County. How can we get to other counties?

A: In Phase 1 we collected 3500 signatures in 9 days in half of Cuyahoga County. We’re doing well!! We have partners on board helping us. CCDP, ACLU, Planned Parenthood. Waiting to hear numbers, thinking they will be good. Need to get through this area quickly so we can get to other areas. If you take petitions, get them back to us within 7-10 days. We will get our signatures, we will get it on the ballot, and we will win.

Q: Jacqie Davis - At West Shore UU we’ve been doing drive thru every Sunday!

A: Yes! Usually get 200 signatures every sunday! We’ve done it two Sundays already.

Q: Karolyn - how do we get ahold of you?

A: <https://protectchoiceohio.com/>; email troy@protectchoiceohio.com, cell 313-350-1558

**Zoe Toscos, President of Cuyahoga County Young Dems**

I’ve worked on Monique Smith, Justin Bibb, Chris Ronayne campaigns. I’m newly elected President of Cuyahoga County Young Dems. Also on Central Committee for CCDP.

Honored to be here! I live right across from St. Ed’s. I’m not Cleveland native, moved here. Our new VP Sidney here as well, also Lakewood resident. We’re both Executive Committee members.

I was elected in January. Me, Sid, 6 other new board members. Completely new board! 6 of us are women. Our secretary & treasurer are men; reversed those gender roles. Thankful to Brendan Heil and prior board members for all they did to build the organization. One of our new board members is fresh out of high school, all the way up through young professionals. We also have lots of campaign experience. Sid and I come from Chris Ronayne campaign most recently. We look forward to using our experiences to support candidates & young people interested in running for office. Our board has been meeting regularly to set goals moving forward.

Goals: We want to reengage youth in our area, meet the moment and do things a bit differently. Want to reach young people who are politically engaged and active. Reaching broad spectrum of young activists. Want to be able to touch a person who saw a school shooting this past week and wants to get involved. Give opportunity for someone taking their first step into politics, as well as those early in career, who may want to run for office. Help people figure out how to become candidate & potential elected official. We’re building bench of campaign staffers really important to me! We see such a need for good campaign talent. Need people who know how to knock on doors, call voters. This helps residents, engages young adults. Re-upping school organizations, local colleges’ dem clubs. We’ve seen decline in those local active groups. Think having leadership team with current college students will be helpful.

We want to increase statewide presence. Cuyahoga County one of bluest counties in state. We’ve been quiet in Ohio Young Dems / Young Dems of America. Planning on taking over state Young Dems party! Cuyahoga County young people deserve to have voice in future of state! Sid & I going to every local Dem club, introducing ourselves. We are more than Cleveland or Lakewood. This is huge county, lots of young people everywhere.

Next meeting - next Wednesday April 5th at Bottlehouse in Cleveland Heights at 7pm. Will be talking about Protect Choice Ohio ballot initiative, taking official vote to endorse. Sending members out to collect signatures. As group of female leaders, decided this is our top priority this year. One board member working for Protect Choice Ohio, one board member has worked for Planned Parenthood, etc. Number one priority for us!

Going to our first Ohio Young Dems convention in May; we’re going to be big and loud. We want to have large presence statewide, so that more attention comes back to Cuyahoga County to give young people what they need to get involved politically.

We want you to send us your kids! As young as middle schooler, up to recent college grad.

We have lots of goals and expectations! Only way to achieve is to build our ranks.

Q: Cindy S - see this problem of apathy across all orgs. Any specific strategies you’re using to get young people engaged?

A: We believe that being one of first, loud voices after an event like Trump being indicted helps promote us. One person can’t lead a group. Having 8 of us dedicated to this mission means we can accomplish a lot more. There may be one active person at CSU Dems, but theoretically they have ~6 friends who can tag along too. Make group welcoming to someone who doesn’t know anything about executive committees or ballot initiatives.

Q: William Yeung - how do you plan to retain members?

A: Working to make club & meetings fun. Previously group focused on meeting at places that have alcohol. If we’re getting high schoolers involved, etc., need to make meetings more accessible. We think getting fun, young people involved who want to make and keep friends will help!

Q: Erik - what is ceiling of age limit?

A: I am one of oldest on board, and I’m 25.

**Maggie Niedzwiecki, Superintendent of Lakewood City Schools, *introduced by Mike Callahan, President of Lakewood City School Board***

Thanks Mike for introduction. I just realized 4 of 5 of my evaluators (School Board members) are here!

Zoe “teed” up my presentation; we are focused on developing young leaders in our community!

We have Vision of Lakewood Graduate, and now Vision of Lakewood Educator.

We have kids for Cuyahoga Young Dems! Lots of kids who want to advocate for what they believe in.

We want our students to have Growth Mindset, Critical & Creative Thinking, Communication, Empathy, Global Awareness & Citizenship, Collaboration.

We brought parents, students, teachers, community members, nutrition associates, etc. together to figure out what students need to be successful today.

We’re still teaching Math, Science, Social Studies, Language Arts.

We realize kids have to be able to persevere when they leave us; they may go through multiple jobs and careers.

Children in one of our elementary schools read When Stars are Scattered. Collaborated with [Refugee Strong](https://www.refugeestrong.org/about) to build library in Dadaab, Kenya. It was their idea & they decided to collaborate, bring to fruition.

We need your help! #PublicSchoolsPublicFunds

Last week many Ohio Superintendents joined at statehouse to ask legislators to put needs of public schools first. Contact your legislator, ask them to use 2022 data for Fair Schools Funding formula, do not expand vouchers, require schools that receive vouchers to meet the same accountability measures as traditional public school districts, increase funding for school safety and to support student wellness.

We educate every student!

Please help preserve taxpayer dollars. Schools have always been well-supported here in Lakewood, want that to continue.

We received grant for $1 million from government for school safety. We need to increase funding for school safety and wellness programs. We should not have to write grant to ensure students have safety.

Q: Erik - thank you for speaking with us tonight! Today on MSNBC saw video clip of two Congresspeople screaming at each other. One was advocating for more guns in schools, to arm teachers.

A: We’re educators! I personally don’t want that responsibility. At my recommendation to our board, that’s not where guns should be. We are fortunate to have the safety forces that we have here in Lakewood. We talk with law enforcement in meeting once a month. You can keep the guns where people are trained fully! We deal with children every day. No one needs gun in hand.

Q: What do safety forces entail?

A: Fire & Police Dept, & six Security Officers, two SROs. Only SROs are armed. SRO = Student Resource Officer (police officers who have additional training to speak to students & build trust).

Q: What’s going on with SEL (social-emotional learning) programs?

A: Our programs are strong in Lakewood, we use SEL lens for all curriculum.

Q: Are there plans to put a crosswalk by Taft school off of Clifton? Too hard to go to Nickelson. There used to be one.

A: Not aware of plans, will bring that up to our officials.

Q: In New Jersey, they mandated information literacy in curriculum. Can we do that?

A: We are incorporating programming for assessing digital literacy. Learning difference between fact and fiction.

**Judge Tess Neff, Judge of Lakewood Municipal Court**

My pleasure to be here!

Lakewood Court is single jurisdiction court with one judge. I approach court like business. I am both administrative and presiding judge. I am on-call all the time. About 5 minutes ago, got call from detective who’s going to meet me here for me to sign search warrant.

I’m in second year, loving it. I go to work every day happy and excited to accomplish & improve.

Lakewood Court awarded $500,000 grant this past October. I had never written a grant in my life! Received help from other city departments. Only 9 courts across state received full amount. We are one of only 4 municipal courts who received it.

Lakewood is pen and paper court. I sign my name with pen, sometimes 100 times a day. Everything inputted in computer later. This grant will help us implement electronic case management system.

Will allow for e-signing (like for the search warrant I have to sign now), text messaging (get a lot of clients who don’t show for court date, then get warrant for their arrest. This text system will remind people of their court date. This is especially helpful for eviction cases! Will prevent evictions). Council passed pay-to-stay, so if tenant can come up with full amount owed, landlord must accept that money now. If landlord doesn’t, affirmative defense for tenant.

Getting self-help kiosk for Court lobby. Will be integrated with new case management system. Will be able to come in, pay fines, print off documents, etc. Won’t have to wait in line at clerk’s office.

We have Cuyahoga County public defender on site! Game changer! Previously, at arraignment, if someone wanted attorney, would have to make calls and work around defender’s schedule to get them there. Having one on site has made things more consistent and fair. Will always have need for assigned counsel.

Other improvements not grant funded. Entered into MOU with Cleveland Municipal Court’s specialized dockets. Four specialized dockets, certified through Ohio Supreme Court. Mental health docket, drug docket, veterans court, & human trafficking. Refer individuals to these dockets, gives them more resources & treatment, but we keep jurisdiction, they are still on probation in our municipal court. These folks are our neighbors! In our community, want them to do well and be successful.

We’ve implemented telephonic interpretation system. We use interpreters on weekly basis. Arabic & Spanish most common. This is highly respected service through Ohio Supreme Court, free of charge. This is important at arraignments. We have over 200 languages we can access within minutes. Assists individual to get through arraignment. Will always use in-person interpreters in court, which costs money, but for arraignment is fine to have one on phone.

Working with Legal Aid to get assistance in representing tenants.

Partnered with LakewoodAlive, Beck Center, Cove Community Center to help individuals complete community service. Rather have them give back to us!

Q: Mike Callahan - human trafficking docket. Do we see these cases?

A: The cases I’ve had have not been substantiated. We suspect, currently, one co-defendant was a trafficker. We can’t get alleged victim to come forward.

Q: Maureen - you came into position with experience, but have you encountered any surprises?

A: The surprise is I feel I’’m always on hamster wheel! So busy & fast-paced. Finally starting to feel settled. Also, working to get staff to change mindset in work to update some things. They’re starting to see benefits of change.

Q: Erica - I had idea of what human trafficking looked like. As I learn about it, realize it looks very different than what I thought. What kind of training or awareness is going on to help people recognize real-life examples?

A: I am not too familiar. Other courts provide more training but I have never really had to deal with it.

Q: What misconceptions are there re: human trafficking?

A: It can be anyone. It’s not just sex, could be work, restaurants, etc. It’s like you’re enslaved.

<http://lakewoodobserver.com/read/2022/12/07/lakewood-municipal-court-is-recipient-of-top-grant-award-of>

**REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

President: Erik - Tess starred in our promo video for our meeting this evening! Stewart Ryan helping us with promoting. Thanks Stewart! Please make sure you signed in; that’s how we track attendance to be eligible to vote. Must have attended 3 meetings in 12 months prior to meeting where we have endorsement vote. Also on attendance sheets, note that it says if you paid dues. Ohio Attorney General trying to stop democracy with raising threshold for constitutional amendment; doesn’t seem like this will necessarily move through the House but Mike & Nickie plan to give update in April meeting.

First Vice President: Maureen - thanks to our speakers tonight! What an impressive group of women! April is Earth month, concentrating on conservation at that meeting. Director of Natural Resources from Metroparks coming to speak to us, and Marnie (who is club member) from Great Lakes Audubon Society. Also working on getting arborist from City of Lakewood.

Political Activism: Drive thru this Sunday April 2nd at Madison Park in back parking lot 1-3pm, looking for volunteers. Also planning to show up to Solstice event & Taste of Lakewood event with petitions. Also working with businesses to get petition signatures, hoping to start next week at The Root. Looking for individuals willing to sit at table at the Root. Mornings preferred. Will also be offering training on Saturday April 22nd 11a-1pm at lakewood main library multipurpose room. We’re especially inviting central & executive committees members to come; each expected to complete one petition. We have google form for those willing to sit at The Root! <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdE3xBjpepm-3K0w4GZIYZOVUn6NUe1Z54JIqYyYfV0TnNsZQ/viewform>

Jay Ketchaver - very important Supreme Court election in Wisconsin on Tuesday. Very important for liberal to win. Wisconsin is swingiest of swing states! Could affect national results! Donate at <https://wisdems.org/>.

Charlie Bango - went to Lakewood Black Caucus Patricia Wellbourne’s class through March. This was by far one of the best diversity programs I’ve had in the many I’ve attended over the years! Will be offered again this coming June. Lakewood Dems will let people know about it! Completely free! 1 hour of your time on a Sunday.

Book Club: Tuesday, April 18th (tax day!). 7pm at Bottlehouse. Reading “Poverty, by America” by Matthew Desmond. Watching CIFF film “Bad Press,” available April 2-9.

Second Vice President: Jeff - will be meeting at Sauced May 25th 6-9pm for Spring Social / membership appreciation! Summer Supper will be Thursday August 10th, featuring Chris Ronayne. Location TBD, most likely at Studio West 117.

Treasurer: Catie - $2,715 in bank account right now. If you haven’t renewed dues, can mail membership check to PO Box 771263, bring cash here, or pay online.

Secretary: Nicole - no update.

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATES**

Cuyahoga County Council: Dale Miller - Congrats to club on great presentation tonight. Lakewood successful in recommended for supplemental $50,000 grant for pickleball court. Climate activists won significant victory at last NOACA meeting, restored previous language. Regarding jail, county prosecutor correct that we have significant problems at jail. We’ve also had successes that haven’t been publicized. Problems of jail do not come from sheriff being elected or appointed; don’t want to come up with oversimplistic solutions. More complex problem.

Lakewood City Council: Jason Shachner - direct concerns about green paint in women’s pavilion to Meghan George. Recently on council, trying to address housing & Aging in Place. Proposed changes to zoning code would increase from 25% to 35% allowance of home that can “dwell” on first floor. Additionally, would be able to create in-law suite (currently prohibition enacted decades ago). Would also like to allow for detached accessory dwelling to exist on properties. Each member has been allocated $250,000 as well as pool of $500,000 for city projects; I’ve already committed some to crosswalk, and some has been committed to Beck Center. Cindy Strebig fundraiser at bottlehouse April 6th.

Ohio Board of Educaiton: Erik, on behalf of Meryl Johnson - encouraging you to call state legislator to stop governor from revamping BOE which would give significant power to governor.

Lakewood School Board: Mike - thank you to Superintendent Niedzwiecki! Very approachable!

Betsy - Facilities evaluation project going on. Already have to update & maintain some buildings. Will have public presentation forthcoming.

ODP/CCDP: Karolyn - County Party taking petition distribution & signature collection very seriously. Leading in state of Ohio! ODP also dedicated to this.

**GENERAL UPDATES:**

Cindy Strebig - As Councilperson Shachner mentioned, I have fundraiser next Thursday April 6th. If you live in ward 3 come sign my petition!

**NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING** - April 27, 2023.

**ADJOURNMENT** - The meeting was adjourned. Motion by Grant, seconded by Ron Petrie.

Event notes prepared by Nicole Parke on March 30, 2023.

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Secretary Approval: sign date

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President Approval: sign date