

# ***Libertarian Party of Allegheny County Meeting Minutes***

January 19, 2022

Call to order: Bruce Letterle called to order the regular meeting of the Libertarian Party of Allegheny County at 6:15 pm on January 19, 2022 at Ritter's Diner.

## **I. Roll call**

**Board:** Bruce Letterle, Chair; David Soltesz, Vice-Chair; Rob Cowburn, Treasurer; Henry Haller; Sam Robb (virtual); Connor Voskuil; Ross Sylvester; Johannes Ernharth.

**Members/etc.:** Justin Philman; Ethan Leslie; Elie Platt; Elmo Diaz; Sam Huth; Adam Lane (virtual); John Rasso.

## **II. Approval of Minutes**

Bill Baierl, Secretary was not present, and Minutes from December were not available. Mr. Letterle requested a volunteer to take the minutes. Mr. Ernharth assumed secretary duties.

## **Committee Reports**

- a) **Political Committee** – Mr. Letterle observed issues related to LP wins / newly elected officials from the Nov 2021 elections dealing with background checks. Mr. Robb offered comments re the nuances of background checks for them as well as those intending to be candidates for candidacy requiring LPPA approval. Simply, while minor victimless infractions (e.g., possession) are a non-issue from the LPPA perspective, more serious violations are a barrier to approval. Agreed this should be disclosed to potential candidates.  
*Elections 2022*  
The Special Election for the 24th District House position was briefly discussed (incumbent retiring). Mr. Voskill observed that most states' election registration periods run from 3/9 -8/1. Mr. Soltesz confirmed that the Special Election date will be April 5, 2022, and that deadline for LPPA candidate certification submission is 2/14, less than one month ahead. The 24th District includes Bloomfield, Highland Park, and Wilkinsburg. Mr. Letterle stated he would check the database for related zip-codes to produce a list of members who might be approached for interest in being the LP candidate. There was also conversation about ordinary elections in 2022, with some discussion of the State level candidates that would be confirmed by the PA Convention. New attendees asked questions during robust conversation. Near the conclusion of the report and discussion, Mr. Robb adjourned for other obligations at 6:33 pm.
- b) **Communications** – Broader goals were restated after comments from Mr. Letterle for benefit of new attendees during an initial open discussion. Mr. Ernharth followed with an update on Social Media. Mr. Letterle confirmed that Treasurer Mr. Cowburn would be providing debit card information to secure a Buffer Subscription for Twitter and Facebook, approved during a previous meeting. Mr. Ernharth also discussed website revisions and discussed the Forum and Group functions. He encouraged the Board to operate committees on the forums section to manage and monitor projects and related discussions in a safe location private and unaffiliated with social media, which he encouraged to be used to project specific goal base LP Allegheny branded objectives.  
The Newsletter was also discussed. Attendees were encouraged to communicate articles to Dave Star who does the Newsletter the week after each monthly meeting, usually.
- c) **Outreach** – Mr. Cowburn discussed that the Committee is taking an approach of building momentum around issue- based initiatives. Energy is being devoted to network and build support and recruitment to the LP by focusing on niche issues that are broadly embraced by the community

without clouding the relationship- building with specific candidate personalities or leading initially with the LP brand, to avoid being prejudged based on prior bias / misinfo, etc.

Among the potential issues volunteered by attendees were (Ethan Leisie) Penn Hills exorbitant sewage rates and (David Soltesz) the “newcomer tax” on new property acquisitions that face an immediate reassessment on the market value of the sale’s price while long-held neighboring property of similar quality/value would remain valued some 10-years prior. The political hesitancy of local politicians to broadly reassess was identified, with incumbents reluctant to rile the majority of owners with a reassessment/tax-increase. A question was raised about ability to communicate with prior volunteers for higher profile candidates, like Jo Jorgenson. It was explained that the organization can draw such demographics from existing databases.

Mr. Coburn referred further discussion / related planning/action to the Committee without objection.

- d) IT – Mr. Letterle offered “No Report” .
- e) **Fundraising** – Mr. Cowburn noted that events needed to be strategized and organized to raise funds. Mr. Letterle observed that the website can create branded swag for sale. Conversation was open-ended. Mr. Ernharth reminded Board that a Strategy Working Committee had been previously approved to focus on organizing the various committees towards short, mid, and longer-term goals and help coordinate between them targets that could provide fundraising opportunities. (e.g, outreach, communications, membership, etc. ). He encouraged motivated members to volunteer to be part of the working group to refine the business plan to provide direction for the committees. Mr. Soltesz cautioned that such a working group be disciplined about its focus and invited contributors so that its efforts are productive and not time-wasting, which was welcomed. It was agreed that the strategy committee should meet in the coming weeks for this objective. Mr. Ernharth requested that those in attendance interested in participating contact him.
- f) **Membership** – Mr. Haller reported that he’s having difficulty access the new website and that despite repeat invites he’s told his acceptance is pending. This item was referred to the IT committee to resolve. Otherwise, it was observe that several new members had joined and that a number of members were technically lapsed and due for renewal. Mr. Ernharth noted that the pending website has the option for automatic annual renewal that will be active once live. No further report.

g) **Old Business**

Mr. Cowburn raised the previously tabled issue of the LP Allegheny’s LPPA board seat representation. The LPPA has requested each county provide a formal county-approved representative substitute hierarchy for the LPPA meetings, with approved individuals ranked first through fifth in order of who is authorized to substitute. (This to prevent rogue representatives filling the seat without formal county authorization.)

There was discussion about soliciting volunteers.

Mr. Coburn motioned that the following hierarchy be adopted and formally submitted to the LPPA.

1. Rob Cowburn
2. Dave Soltesz
3. Justin Philman
4. Michael Sauer
5. Bruce Letterle

The motion was seconded by David Soltesz. The motion was approved unanimously.

**New Business**

Mr. Soltesz noted the PA Convention (first weekend in March 2022) is formally open for registration. Mr. Coburn reported on the lengthy LPPA January meeting, noting there were three contentious issues that extended the meeting well beyond normal length.

Mr. Ernharth moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Cowburn seconded the motion. The motion passed without objection 7:47 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Johannes Ernharth

Standing in for Bill Baierl, Secretary