**The Lakewood Democratic Club**

**Minutes of Regular Meeting held** **January 27, 2022
Online space at zoom.us**

**CALL TO ORDER**: The meeting was called to order at 7:04 by President Erik Meinhardt.

Officers present were President Erik Meinhardt, First Vice-President Maureen Dostal, Second Vice-President Mark Schneider, Treasurer Catie McMahon, Secretary Nicole Parke. The President chaired the meeting. The Secretary took notes.

**APPROVAL of the MINUTES**: The body approved the minutes from November 18, 2021.

RECOGNITION OF NOTABLES - School Board President Betsy Shaughnessy, Lakewood City Council-appoint Kyle Baker, County Executive candidate Chris Ronayne, judicial candidate Retanio Rucker (www.RetanioRuckerforJudge.com), judicial candidate Anne McDonough, Judge & candidate Rick Bell, Judge & candidate Peter Corrigan, State Senator & candidate Nickie Antonio, Judge & candidate Thomas O’Malley, School Board Member Nora Katzenberger, Judge & candidate Deborah Turner, CCDP City Leader Karolyn Isenhart, judicial candidate Kevin Kelley, Lakewood City Councilman Jason Shachner, judicial candidate Jeffrey Saffold

Grant MacKay announced ending his judicial candidacy.

**HOUSEKEEPING**: Please join us after the meeting for food, a drink, and social time at Sauced Taproom at the corner of Detroit and Warren. Be sure to renew your membership on our website lakewooddemocrats.com. President Meinhardt recognized a moment of silence for Holocaust Remembrance Day.

**PROGRAM:**

Cynthia Connolly is a citizen of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians located in Northern Michigan and is the Director of Programming at the City Club of Cleveland. Prior to that, Cynthia spent six years as the Development Director at Policy Matters Ohio. Cynthia also teaches the Native American Studies course at Kent State University’s Department of Africana Studies. Cynthia earned her Master of Public Administration from Cleveland State University; and received a Bachelor of Arts in American Culture with a focus in Native American Studies from the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor. Cynthia also serves on the board for the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy in Washington, DC; is the Vice President of University Settlement in Cleveland's Slavic Village neighborhood; and serves on the executive board of the Lake Erie Native American Council in Cleveland. In 2021, Cynthia was named a Native American Top 40 Under 40 by the National Center for American Indian Enterprise and Development; as well as a 2021 Crain's Cleveland Business 40 Under Forty.

Jessica Vallejo is the Secretary for the Committee of 500 Years of Dignity and Resistance, a nonprofit which promotes dignity and respect for Indigenous peoples and advocates for Indigenous cultures and heritage through education, activism, and grassroots organizing. Jess has a BA in Comparative Ethnic Studies and American Studies from The Ohio State University. She is a graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Medical Massage, the Upledger Institute, and International Cupping Therapy Association. She was a member of Alpha Psi Lambda, Alpha Chapter- the first Latino/a Fraternity in the United States, founded in 1985 at the Ohio State University. Jessica's family is Dine, Yoeme and Mexica, we are descendants of the first people.

Cynthia: (says hello in Native language), lives in Ohio City, graduated from University of Michigan, two kids who go to CMSD, husband works at NASA, director of programming at City Club of Cleveland, spent 6 years at Policy Matters Ohio, previously worked at Ohio City Inc.

Jess: grew up in Toledo, family came north from Texas as migrant workers, been in cleveland for ten years, went to Ohio State, helped bring attention to racist mascot and imagery of Cleveland baseball team, became Secretary of Committee of 500 Years recently, Committee active throughout the state. “Some of us have come here, and some of us are from here.” Learning institutions are the next focus for removing racist mascot & imagery.

**Q&A:**

Erik: Tell us about your organizations, what they do, and what your position is?

 Jess - Committee committed to sharing education and history of stories that aren’t told. Native-led organization. Elevate voices of Indigenous people. Members of all backgrounds; don’t have to be indigenous to be member. Ohio has more racist mascots and imagery than any other state in elementary, middle & high schools; approximately 78. Culture needs to be changed in these communities. Legislation has been discussed at state level. No requirement to teach Indigenous history in our schools. Working with Lake Erie Native American Council, etc. Offering education outside of school system, but would like to see it in schools.

 Cynthia - on exec board of Lake Erie Native American Council. 501c3. Founded by local elders. Direct programming for youth, culture classes, annual Pow-Wow, as well as advocacy & engagement. Speaking at meetings, conversations at libraries, schools, local groups to educate non-natives about culture & experiences of native people. “Picture in your head Native American culture;” trying to bring everyone’s knowledge of Native American culture into the present day. Name a Native American who is still alive. Contemporary! Last fall, donated Harvest dinners, signed people up for vaccine appointments. Cleveland is Anishinaabe land.

Maureen: Can you give history of Native Americans in Northeast Ohio

 Cynthia - this land had a diverse group of tribes. North & South American indigenous people made up 22% of world’s population. (Currently North & South American indigenous people make up 12-13%). Great Lakes region had Odawa, Potawatomi, Onondaga, Erie, Miami, Shawnee, etc. Never had hard borders, not like it is today. Some of the first to be colonized. Movement westward caused displacement from east coast; further pushed west. Ohio does not have any federally recognized tribes currently. Michigan has 12. Some tribes in Ohio working toward state recognition. Termination Era - Government bused Native Americans to Cleveland & other urban areas (because no reservations here) in an effort to assimilate Native Americans into white culture. Many Native Americans here still connected to culture, tribes. Spurred American Indian movement. Cleveland has same Native population as Detroit even though no federally recognized tribes here. Now fourth or fifth generation since this era.

 Jess - Important to note Cynthia speaking from her tribal homeland; I am not.

Erik: Which tribes still reside in the area if any (or where were they relocated)?

 Cynthia - Native tribes that were brought here were dropped on the east side of Cleveland, guise as jobs program. Predatory in who they recruited from reservation - boarding schools, Vietnam War vets. Was cultural genocide.

 Jess - Urban environment has changed our families. We are multi ethnic, multilingual, multicultural. Those of us who were relocated, many have lost connection with our tribes. Diverse in our experiences & families. Important for us to have Lake Erie Native American Council to reconnect.

Cynthia - Native Americans have highest vaccination rates for COVID-19 in the country because of Indian Health Service - centralized healthcare. I received phone call from tribe to get vaccinated at end of January 2021. Elders in Cleveland are backbone of our community; sometimes go back to our reservations to get healthcare they need.

Rob McRae: Is there current legislation introduced in the Statehouse or Congress that we can support?

Jess - Adam Miller & Jessica Miranda introduced bill to ban use of Native American imagery and mascots in our schools. In Statehouse there is only one depiction of Native American life - Treaty of Greenville. Ohio has long way to go.

Chris Ronayne: Treaty of Greenville connected to Cuyahoga river. Public Square in Cleveland is the site of first Native American murdered by white man by trial - public execution. Are there resources for genealogical exploration for those of us who have heard that we have Native American roots?

 Jess - Yes, many don’t know that Public Square history. There are some other landmarks in the area that speak to Native American history, near the Browns stadium and in the flats.

 Cynthia - We want to “honor history” but we’re also here now! I’m in talks with Irishtown Bend project to include landmarks there. Often erasure of Native Americans in these conversations. Even in my kids’ own school. Genealogy question - can’t use DNA tests to apply for tribal citizenship. 33% of people in U.S. believe they have Indigenous roots. Most tribal nations do have genealogy departments; come prepared with names of relatives. No blood quantum requirements in tribal nations, gain citizenship through familiar relations.

Maureen: What were the strategies used to influence the Cleveland Guardians to finally change their name/logo from previous versions invoking Native Americans?

 Cynthia - It was a more-than-6-year fight, actually dates back to 1950s (during relocation). George Floyd murder brought new attention to conversation. The conversation was focused too long on “who’s offended”. Racism is systemic. Solving one issue wont solve everything. Four Native organizations in Northeast Ohio. 100 businesses signed onto letter of support. Team was finally willing to listen. Received a lot of support in community from allies.

 Jess - Team officials finally humanized us. We had elders to tell their stories and shared their trauma.

Erik: What are the correct terms/language to use and be careful of when referring to Native Americans?

 Cynthia - 1) referring to Indigenous people in the past tense is a big No. This is very common in Ohio where we don’t have federally recognized tribes. We don’t have the luxury of saying “someone you know is probably Native” b/c we are only 2 or 3 % of population. Audit your social media - who are you following who is indigenous? What authors are you reading, what news sources are you following? No clear names for us; government tried to define us for a long time. I recommend following “Illuminated” Native American nonprofit. 2) appropriation. Our culture is not for white savior consumption. i.e. dreamcatchers. We were not allowed to practice religion until 1978.

 Jess - our family history was systematically disenfranchised from tribal membership. Prefer people to ask me how I identify. Indigenous people in what we now call Mexico were never given Native American title.

Maureen: What are the challenges currently facing Native Americans and how can we be allies and advocates?

 Cynthia - Native Americans predominantly low-income community. We face all the same problems that other impoverished communities face. Need adequate representation and visibility. Native American culture is living and breathing. Finally got tv shows - Reservation Dogs, Rutherford Falls.

 Jess - Support Reps Miller & Miranda’s resolution. Need standards for accurate Native American history in our schools. 87% of schools don’t talk about Native American history after the year 1900.

Senator Antonio: Parma recently decided not to change racist mascot. Though we are not of that community, what are your recommendations?

 Cynthia - can’t put these things to a vote like Parma did. Systemic racism can’t be put to a vote. One student was put at center of conversation, bore the weight of the debate. This is beyond whether or not we’re individually offended. We are never seen as modern people, which creates void that's filled with mascots and imagery. This makes on-Native people who have no connection to us today less likely to support us. This is systemic problem, not one of individual offense. Mascots have been proven to be harmful. They affect way non-Native people see Native people.

Contact us: LENACohio@gmail.com; Committeeof500years.org;

**REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

President: Erik - thanks for coming to holiday party! Planning to continue virtual meetings with more in-person social events. Planning a spring social. Thank you also to those who welcomed Nan Whaley to Lakewood. Thanks to Maureen for advocating for this program.

First Vice President: Maureen - thanks to Karolyn for connecting us with Jess & Cynthia. Thanks to everyone who came to our “Drive thru for democracy”. About 15 different candidates got signatures. About 55 people came through. Lots of members came to help as well and stood out in the cold.

Political Activism: Jay - didn’t get John Lewis Act or For The People Act passed. Steve Bannon telling his listeners to run for local office. Encouraging people to cheat and overturn elections. Make a recurring donation to Run for Something.

<https://runforsomething.net>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2022/01/january-6-insurrection-trump-coup-2024-election/620843/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/22/america-fascism-legal-phase>

 <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-the-american-polity-is-cracked-and-might-collapse-canada-must-prepare/>

Erik - looking to restart weekly “Action Night” we used to do at Bottlehouse.

Book Club: Tuesday, February 15, 2022 at 7pm we will have our book club meeting on Zoom. For February, we will read: Woke Racism: How a New Religion Has Betrayed Black America by John McWhorter. New York Times bestselling author and acclaimed linguist John McWhorter argues that an illiberal neoracism, disguised as antiracism, is hurting Black communities and weakening the American social fabric.​ We will also watch the film In the Same Breath (HBO), a look at how the Chinese government turned pandemic cover-ups in Wuhan into a triumph for the Communist Party. Registration link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYtcuivrT8uGdDGqT6fbUqeqBVslF2evlt->

Second Vice President: Mark - CCDP Exec Committee made recommendations and endorsements in all races. Join me in electing Democrats! Let’s continue raising money for our club and candidates. More events coming!

Treasurer: Catie - $9,930.76 in the bank as of 01/27/2022. Reminder to renew your membership on our website!

Secretary: Nicole - Will continue to share links and event info in our facebook group!

UPDATES

Statehouse: Senator Antonio - Ohio Supreme Court told Redistricting Commission to redraw maps to make them reflect our state. Maps are currently back in the court. No one willing to change candidates’ filing deadline which Wednesday February 2nd. Passed bill with amendment that says you can turn in your petition if you got them from registered Democrats in the county. Anyone who lives in cuyahoga county can sign my petition now. This will allow us to file to run. If maps currently stand, very possible State Rep Skindell and I will be in primaries. Anticipate likely won’t have County Party endorsements. Will need all of you to step up in support of us. People are hungry to get involved, to protect our democracy, want something to do!

County Council: Dale not present.

Lakewood City Council: Councilman Shachner - Cove Community Center nearly finished! Really exciting! Health & Human Services department will now be housed there. Soundproof rooms for residents to meet with social workers. We could start having meetings there!

Kyle Baker selected to be Lakewood’s Ward 1 Councilperson!

Councilman Bullock - Kaufmann Park new and improved! Finally seeing movement on larger housing developments, which will put downward pressure on prices.

Lakewood School Board: President Shaugnessy - speakers tonight were fantastic! Planning to get in touch with them regarding our schools’ curriculum. School Board had organizational meeting, made committee appointments. Consultant completed review of educational & recreational activities. Will be replacing athletic field at Garfield Middle School. Had first reading of amendment regarding improvement & maintenance of fields.

Nora - Native American Studies course at Lakewood High School now. Very popular, will be offered again next year.

CCDP: Karolyn - over 5 hour-long City & Ward Leader recommendation meeting on Saturday & 4-hour-long endorsement meeting last night; many candidates now running unopposed. Judge Deborah Turner endorsed in competitive race, three candidates running in one juvenile race. Chris Ronayne endorsed overwhelmingly for County Executive, which has serious competition on the Republican side.

Steve Bennet - filing deadline next Wednesday February 2nd. Look into precinct committee positions!

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING - Thursday, February 24th at 7pm.

ADJOURNMENT - The meeting was adjourned at 9:04pm.

Event notes prepared by Nicole Parke on January 27, 2022.

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Secretary Approval: sign date

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President Approval: sign date