

MINUTES FOR JUNE 20, 2023 MEETING BIRMINGHAM BLOOMFIELD AREA DEMS

At approximately 7:10 pm the meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Emery Pence as Chair Debbie Rosenman was not in attendance. Other board members not in attendance: Libby Dzurka, Andrew Corey and Cynthia Shaw.

Both the minutes from the May meeting and agenda for this this meeting were approved.

Corinne Shoop volunteered to take the minutes for the present meeting and also gave the Treasurer's Report. Attendees were advised that any questions regarding the details regarding either of the accounts should be directed to Libby Dzurka, our treasurer.

Vice Chair Emery Pence then a brief update on the student internship program. He advised that many were graduating and although they desired to stay informed of the events of the club and help in the summer when they returned from college, we need to get new students involved. He asked anyone who knows of any student in the area that is interested in providing him with their contact information and he would contact them.

He also gave an update on the political influencer group. There are 2 courses of action that the group has taken in the past. The first in contacting our respective state representatives regarding pending bills requesting action and the second is the postcard writing campaign. Currently, postcards are being written concerning a legislative race in Virginia. If anyone is interested, there are packs of 25 with instructions that he would like mailed in September.

Kermit Williams was the first guest speaker. He is a representative from the non-profit Oakland Forward and the political action organization Oakland Forward Action Fund. As we are a political organization he focused on the latter.

Oakland Forward Action Fund evolved from the Pontiac Action Council. The Pontiac Action Council was formed in response to the emergency manager control in Pontiac and the decision to close all youth centers by the emergency management. It started with a grassroots effort to pass a mileage to funds to reopen or re-establish the youth centers.

Oakland Forward Action Fund was formed to provide the grassroots efforts for economic opportunity and equality for Black residents throughout Oakland County. The goal is to end poverty and place wealth in neighborhoods. Until Blacks have economic freedom, there is no equality. He is asking our membership to become allies and join the Oakland Forward Action Fund. He also emphasized that only 30% of the electeds representing Oakland County in all levels of government are Black. He also noted that there is only one Black person holding a state office, the Lt. Governor. Kermit reminded the group that Justice Kyra Harris Bolden will need our support in 2024 as she must run for re-election. He explained that until our elected officials and the governmental budgets reflect equality, there is no equality.

He is currently working on HB 4707. This bill addresses mental health and gives it the same concern as physical health.

The second guest speaker was Aqeela Muntaqim from Mothering Justice. This organization advocates to empower Black mothers and encouraging them to become activists and use their voice. The issues that it is focusing on currently is equitable maternal health care for Black women, equal pay, paid leave and affordable childcare. Pay equity is vital for Black mothers so that they can provide housing, safe water and food for their children. These fundamental rights are necessary to care for our children. She asked that our membership check their website www.motheringjustice.org for more information and opportunities to participate.

The last guest speaker was Kimber Bishop-Yanke of the Oakland County Task Force on Homelessness and Poverty. She gave a detailed account of the confusion and disfunction present in the system to assist the homeless, not only in Oakland County but throughout the state and federal agencies. She explained that the confusion amounts to re-traumatizing the individuals seeking help. The lack of coordination of agencies and programs is next to impossible to navigate. She and her staff encounter obstacles that appear to be nothing more than bureaucracy. Local, state and federal agencies utilize different and confusing criteria to define “homelessness” that results in too many not getting the help so desperately needed.

She explained that there is a great need for education regarding the issues of homelessness and poverty in Oakland County. It is estimated that there are 130,000 families one crisis away from homelessness. There are approximately 6000 homeless children in Oakland County and hundreds of teenagers that have absolutely no place to live or to get help. There are only 2 shelters in Oakland County, one for adults that is coed and nothing more than a large room with bunkbeds that has proven not to be safe for women. The other shelter is for families. It is operated by Lighthouse and can accommodate only a limited number of families.

She advised that there is always a need for money and volunteers. She also encouraged members to educate themselves on what is needed and what more can be done and impress that need upon our elected officials.

After the guest speakers was “Good and Welfare”. We had two candidates for Chair of the 12th Congressional District introduce themselves. Sharon Person from Southfield and Kate Shishkovsky from Livonia.

Larry Lipton also announced that Hill Harper was going to announce his candidacy for US Senate on July 11, 2023. He informed the members that he is a progressive candidate that we will be hearing a lot about in the future.

The meeting was then adjourned.

Minutes Submitted by Corinne Shoop, Trustee.

Attendees (18)

Howard Baron	Linda Pence
Kimber Bishop Yanke	Joseph Person
Mike Corbin	Sharon Person
Sandy Hansell	Kate Shishkovsky
Beata Lamparski	Corinne Shoop
Larry Lipton	Frederick Simms
Shadia Martini	Deborah Wahl
Aqueela Muntaqim	Jurgen Wiesenberger
Emery Pence	Kermit Williams