

New Kent County Democratic Committee Meeting Tuesday, May 10, 2016

In attendance:

Donna Friend
Linda Friend
Bob Jeremiah
Houston Gray
Selena Gray
Alease Christian
Charles Moss
Richard Williams
Christine Williams
Susan Moon
Jack Winson
JoAnn Winson
Matt Rowe
Joyce Williams
Julia Taylor

The Chair called the committee to order at 7:01p.m.

The Chair reviewed the agenda:

- Presentation from Matt Rowe – Democratic nominee for the 1st District
- Old Business
 - Approval of past meetings' minutes
 - Review/update on the conventions
 - Vacancy in the Treasurer's position
- New Business

The Chair ceded the floor to Matt Rowe.

Matt started by taking questions about the new 1st District. JoAnn Winson asked about what the new 1st includes (all the way up to Manasas & Dumfries down I-95 toward Hampton Roads – although less of Hampton Roads is included now).

Matt introduced himself: He lives in Bowling Green, VA & is on the city council there. He works for Stafford County as a Geological Information Systems Engineer (as he describes it, he's a mapmaker). He assured everyone that he is legal to vote and rent a car (he looks very young), and that it is legal for him to run because the Hatch Act does not bar him from running (it applies to federal employees only). His wife is a federal

employee, so he shared that he understands the concerns in recent years about government shut downs and passing a budget. They have three children.

He spoke for some time about the VA system & how he feels strongly about providing for our veterans. Multiple members of the community shared with him their experiences with the VA both in terms of access and quality of care. He strongly supports improved funding and administration for the VA to provide high quality care to veterans.

Matt also spoke about the need for improved infrastructure in the greater D.C. area and the expenses associated with that.

Matt also explained that another platform issue for him is improved family & maternity leave. He recognized that while the FMLA (Family and Medical Leave Act) is a start, it only protects those who have been working in their jobs for over a year and it only ensures that employees can take 12 weeks of unpaid leave, which isn't necessarily feasible for families with young children. We are the only developed country that doesn't have paid maternity leave and one of only four countries in the world that don't have paid maternity leave (the others being Papua New Guinea, Tonga, and Samoa).

Bob Jeremiah asked about Matt's position on three issues:

- College Loans:
 - Matt said he doesn't believe in wiping out all college loan debt wholesale. He does support enabling individuals to refinance their college loans, much the way you do for a mortgage. He also supports programs he says are offered in other countries where students can arrange for graduated payments so that they pay a smaller amount at the start of their career when they are lower paid and they pay more as they make more. Matt also said he supports the idea of helping provide for community college, because much as it was once necessary to have a high school diploma to work, it's increasingly becoming necessary to have at least a little college to work.
- Healthcare:
 - He supports legislation at the federal level that supports the Medicaid gap that has come about as a result of the Affordable Care Act. He also supports the idea of implementing a public option under the Affordable Care Act so that people can purchase health insurance from the government and have the public plans compete with the private plans.
- Tip Credit/Pay for the Service Industry:

- Matt said he supports raising the federal minimum wage and weaning the country (over a period of years) off the tip system. He cited inequities in the system that arise from where you work (both geographically & the type of restaurant) and when you work (lunch shift vs. dinner shift), as well as studies that show how hard people work is not impacted at all by their ability to earn more tips. Instead, he pointed to studies that show that people work harder when they are confident that they have a consistent paycheck than when they are dependent upon a variable one from tips.

Matt spoke for a while about how this is a unique and opportune time to be running. He thinks there's a real chance for the Democrats to take back the House. He feels the Republicans, with Trump, are reaping what they sowed. The 1st District has always been a tough district for a Democrat to run. There's also always a drop off between the number of votes cast for the Democratic Presidential candidate and the number of votes cast for the Congressional representative. Matt wants to change that this year, and he says it's the marginal seats, like the 1st District, which if Democrats can win them would give the Democrats a majority in the House.

Houston asked about Matt's opponent, Rob Wittman, who is an incumbent. He's running for re-election, but he's also declared his candidacy for Governor of Virginia. If he's re-elected to his current seat in Congress, that means he's going to spend much of 2017 working to be elected Governor instead of representing his constituency in Congress. If Wittman is then elected Governor, then he'll leave his seat in Congress vacant until a special election held. Because special elections typically have a very poor turnout, it's likely that the seat will go to a Republican. So essentially, Wittman is counting on the taxpayers to pay him to run for another office and provide him with a fallback job in case he doesn't get the one he really wants (Governor). Wittman has also said he will support Trump for President.

Matt expressed a need for volunteers and donations. He had donation forms with him and told everyone that they can also donate online by going to his webpage: www.mattrowe.org.

Old Business:

Agenda Item: Approval of past meetings' minutes

JoAnn Winson moved to accept both the minutes from the regularly scheduled March meeting and the emergency meeting in March. Bob Winson seconded the motion. The Committee unanimously approved the motion to accept both sets of minutes.

Agenda Item: Review/update on the conventions:

The Chair shared that the 7th District Convention went well, but that the 1st District Convention has been cancelled for New Kent County. This is because New Kent's participation was limited to going to nominate a candidate for the House of Representatives. However, because Matt Rowe was the only person who paid the filing fee and filed to run before the filing deadline, there's no need to have a convention. Therefore, our portion of the convention has been cancelled. The 1st District will still hold their convention so that they can cast their ballots for delegates to the Presidential convention.

Agenda Item: Vacancy in the Treasurer's Position

The Chair shared that Herb Jones has resigned his position as treasurer and rescinded his pre-filing to be a delegate to both conventions. Susan Moon has kindly agreed to run for the position. The Chair asked for nominations from the floor. None were made. JoAnn Winson moved to accept Susan as our new Treasurer. Linda Friend seconded the motion. The motion to accept Susan as the committee's new treasurer passed without objection.

New Business

The Chair announced that she and Linda have been successful in selling their house. Closing is later this month, but she and Linda will not move to North Carolina until mid-June. We will need to hold an election at the next meeting to replace her, if we can find someone who will step up. Donna shared her concern that the attendance at the meetings has declined since the meeting location was changed some time ago and wonders if we need to change the meeting location or if the committee is going to go dormant due to lack of involvement and leadership.

The Committee discussed it and agreed that Donna should resign her seat as Chair as of the date of her closing, May 13. Several members of the committee felt that having the seat vacant may help light a fire under someone and provide some urgency. Everyone agreed that we all need to spread the word throughout the community and encourage anyone we know who may want to participate in the committee or take the helm to do so.

Donna thanked the committee for the opportunity to serve and said she's enjoyed it and

Houston Gray moved to adjourn the meeting. Jack Winson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.