

VPP CoCo Minutes 4/13/2019

1. Members present: Chair Anthony Pollina, Vice Chair Meg Polyte, asst Treasurer Morgan Daybell, Secretary Chris Brimmer, Director Josh Wronski, Barbra Prine, Spoon Agave, Tanya Vyhousky, Cindy Weed, Adam Norton, Maddi Walker, Jesse Warren, Nick Clark, Marselle Blain, Traven Leyshon, Susan Davis, Chris Pearson participated by phone.

2. Josh reviewed the endorsement/nomination process. On the ballot, write-in and local nomination to fill local vacancy on the ballot. No control by the state level party over local committee nominations. Anthony talked about how there is not real pressure in the Senate to nail down a party affiliation, Chris P, commented that it is a little more formal in the House. Anthony said we really don't have a mechanism for disciplining voting, a lot of internal politics tend to make party labels less important. Barb made the point that the fusion system does create confusion about what is a Progressive, Chris P agreed but also made the point that fusion is an important way to get elected. Anthony wants us to define a clear set of issues that should be a metric to judge voting behavior. Traven made the point that we are a candidate driven party and that needs to change to avoid being absorbed into the Democratic Party. Morgan pointed out that electoral strategy requires us to look at them individually. Chris P says that with a 30 member Senate it is very personality driven. Josh says the house is very partisan, the caucuses are closed, secret and whipped, people work on a personal level but not as caucuses, starting to have the serious conversations, a lot of frustration by the D/Ps with the Democratic leadership and may start to defect. Meg doesn't think we have found a way to leverage our power. Adam sees an issue with a lack of leadership, disorganized, and off message, thinks we need to get our caucus organized before we tackle an issue like fusion. Nick talked about the process and vote counts from his own electoral experience, thinks that the culture is shifting toward running as straight Progressives but the P/D may be useful but reminds us that most of our pickups have been D/P and this is diluting our brand here and nationally. Cindy thinks there needs to be a whip and a lot more communication with the D/Ps. Susan agrees with Adam on caucus organization and with Cindy that there needs to be a stronger whip and a willingness to press the House Speaker more; the Democrats are working with the Republicans more than with the Progressives, Susan sees that Progs have power in the House but aren't wielding it. Barb not ready to junk the D/P yet, especially for multi-seat districts, we need to think about who we are and how we communicate that. Spoon sees party discipline as becoming more important now that the caucus is larger. Chris P thinks that teamwork may be lacking in the House and press outreach in the that chamber is a problem, now we don't have any non-fusion electeds and that is diluting our public image, this is about mitigation, we started copying Bernie in running in the primary and doing the write-in approach. Jesse wants to know what the goal is, where is the party going? Seems to Jesse that we have always mirrored Bernie's relationship with the Democratic Party. Tanya says she was discouraged from running as a straight P, although that's what she wanted to do, she has felt the lack of cohesive leadership and sees that translating into the House caucus. Cindy suggests that a House member serve on the CoCo, possibly require caucus attendance at some CoCo meetings. Meg says the House caucus has committed to a retreat this Summer. Travon wants a party that drives candidates and not the other way around, thinks a subcommittee should come together to formulate some options and a framework for discussion. Meg reminded CoCo that there is an elections/leadership committee with membership in several areas; Travon sees that as a start but other should be added. Susan mentioned that there is an ambivalence between the CoCo and the House caucus. Jesse thinks the time is right for a conversation about how we communicate who and what we are. Josh says there is a fear of litmus tests by the electeds. Nick thinks our electeds are very issue oriented rather than party oriented, sees the conversation as how we become the majority party not should. Nick would like to see Elections Committee take on the party building in the off years. Meg sees a lack of consensus and thinks we need to come to an agreement as a CoCo before we hand this off to some one else, we are a

political party not an issue party. Jesse would like to see one person be on point. Tanya suggested that we as a CoCo do some strategic planning in a retreat environment, Meg suggested a group of three to establish a framework for a meeting. Meg sees May/June time frame wants to use this to drive reorg, Tanya wants an outside facilitator.

2) Nick moves to pick three people to setup a workshop Tanya second, motion passed by acclamation. Three are Susan, Nick and Jesse. The target is May.

3) Discussion of State Committee meeting schedule, should we meet on the 18th of May? Meg says that attendance is driven by speakers, but it should be a work party for people committed to the party. We need to work around Josh's vacation. Meg concerned that we austerity budget without looking at the future. How are we going to deal with the work flow. We are doing an eval on Josh, and we need to think through reorg. We need a committee to look at tools to grow. Adam has offered to fill-in, Meg also thinks we need a liaison to be point for Burlington while Josh is out, Meg and Barb will figure out arrangements after the meeting.

4) Josh gave a recap on reorg. Town Sept 14-30, county 19-27 October, state convention is in November. Starting in August we need to get the County Chairs involved. Need a County level outreach for counties that don't have active committees. Meg wants to know if we want to set up a committee to do a more organized and strategic effort? Nick warns that if you form house district committees it signals the Democrats that we are running. Susan wants to hand this off to the Elections Committee but would like to see a more targeted approach. Chris B thinks we need to lean on the County Chairs. Nick would like us to look at a more regional approach and identify house districts that might be ripe for pick up. Anthony suggested orienting the next State Committee meeting around building movement and party, tie in reorg. Barb suggested an ad hoc committee with Elections, and possibly County Chairs. Morgan, Tanya and Adam up for reorg committee. Josh will send out a reorg schedule.

5) State Committee meeting plan, 3 hour meeting. Tanya suggested we not be issue specific. Adam suggested getting some of the climate kids down to speak. Jesse inclined to have the smaller group meeting and then bring that to the larger group, Nick agrees that we should try to have the retreat before the State Committee meeting. Susan suggested that perhaps someone from one of the regional planning commissions or one of the state agencies. Traven would like to see some folks from the Sunrise Movement, how do we build the power for climate change? These are big power. Barb doesn't think its an either or. Josh sees a local platform tie in. Tanya wants a link between climate change and other issues. Morgan thinks there should be some action from this, Barb suggested Jack Hanson to tie it together. Cindy is suggesting a potluck. Nick thinks movement building requires connecting the dots, connect climate to the economy. Location? Randolph? Montpelier? Grange in Berlin? Thetford?

6) Josh met with Travis, runs a consulting business that runs branding for startups and organizations. Does one organizations a quarter and looking at us. Would be able to set us up across platforms. Thinks reorg would be a good rollout. Meg asked if he could participate in some of our other conversations about mission and goals, party building efforts. Susan commented that she collects a lot of data but has never had the staff to enter it. Data Base Committee, Nick, Morgan and possibly Jeremy Hanson, Jesse will go on it as well, Josh and Meg. Meg suggested that Travis start with the platform. Morgan suggested this happen while after Josh is back.

7) Discussion of CoCo meeting prior to the State Committee meeting, Jesse suggested canceling the CoCo in lieu of the retreat, broad consensus yes, meeting 1-4 on the 18th.

8) Meeting adjourned at 12:45.