

Gloucester Democratic City Committee
Monthly Meeting
February 11th, 2021
Via Zoom

(26) Members and Guests signed in.

Matt Murray, Chair opened the meeting at 6 pm. The early start was an accommodation to the evening's guest speaker who was scheduled for another meeting after ours.

Deanna Fay, GDCC Vice Chair, introduced the Guest Speaker, Natalie Bowers, who is the head of the newly formed chapter of the NAACP of the Massachusetts North Shore.

Natalie described the impetus for formation of an NAACP Chapter in the NS area as arising from the tumult surrounding the George Floyd incident. A wave of people woke up. The interest of the Hamilton-Wenham human rights committee was captured by Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement.

But, there was a lack of black leadership. An email was sent to the national NAACP headquarters who responded that, if we want to fight for the cause, that we want you. Racism is not a black problem but a national problem. The national NAACP representative explained that the NRA and the AARP have big membership lists which sets them up to be listened to by legislators.

Steps: First – create an NAACP group. Natasha Brown of Hamilton assembled a group of 175 members. They chartered and established an Executive Committee of people with strong skills.

Second. Set up an agenda. Adopt a top down agenda. 6 game changers: voting rights, health, criminal justice, education for everyone, young members (20-21).

Third. Set up Committees. Membership, environmental justice, coastal erosion, water availability, affordable housing vs. fair housing.

Fourth. Visibility of issues is an important point. Create a network of visibility. 18 towns in the North Shore area from Salisbury to Marblehead. Take an active role if you have the time and the skillset.

Natalie set out a series of guidelines they follow in pursuit of their goals:

A key goal is to create a safe space to learn how not to be racist.

Offer support for white members. Elevate and amplify of black excellence. Put time in to learn. An example, Janelle McNish from the Trustees of Reservations has spoken of making the properties more welcoming to persons of color. Give people a platform for talking about these things.

Lobbying, for example for the police reform bill. [Natalie did not describe specific lobbying for the police reform bill by the NS NAACP. Time wise they may have just been setting up. She urged lobbying in general, however, on key litigation such as this bill.] Litigation. Example, calling for removal of blue line flags from Danvers cruisers. [Again, details not described of NAACP chapter specific work.]

Natalie referred generally to work done by a BU Professor McKenzie who works with the ASPIRE program. Something we might look up. Also referenced the work of Hillary Robinson a criminal justice sociologist.

Natalie: We, NS NAACP, are a support in the community to help you with race based issues.

The goal is to implement the NAACP. Personal game changers: encourage friendships; walk and hike activities; use the public spaces.

Natalie took questions from this point:

Membership = \$30 a year.

Lacey, q. re NAACP organization. Natalie: some states have a single chapter, convention. MA has more.

Insert: Natalie described living in Covington, KY where there was a Freedom Center where the history of slavery was described. Natalie joined the NAACP Branch there in 2008.

Mike Wheeler, q. re organization. The NAACP is 112 years old. The Bylaws are the “boss”. Doesn’t partner with other organizations although the BLM (Black Lives Matter) movement has brought the NAACP into the computer age. Natalie, BLM members should be NAACP members.

Mike also asked about efforts to attract younger people into the NAACP. Mike mentioned that a BLM standout in the Spring of 2020 was organized and drew in many younger people. Natalie: the NAACP does not have specific youth outreach. She feels however that younger people in general have a better appreciation of the cultural aspects of race issues.

Mary Kingsley asked about work on environmental justice and the impact on families. Natalie: working on this with the national

committee. Trying for a training. Had one planned but needed 50 to conduct the training, came up short with 24.

Natalie Bowers left us at this point after giving us much to think about!

Matt resumed the regular part of the meeting. Matt addressed the ongoing impeachment trial briefly. Are Hawley, Cruz and Rubio dupes or are they leaders of some disastrous movement? Caution: the next Trump, God deliver us, could be smarter, wiler than this one and push all the way through. The local GOP continues to talk on about the legitimacy of the election. We need to call out this kind of nonsense in our own community, not to let it pass.

A new member was added to the GDCC from Ward 4, Barbara Kelley.

Secretary, Acting, Liz Murray – summary of January 14th Monthly meeting minutes. Approved.

Treasurer's report: Lacey Comiskey:

Expenses:	877	(storage 6 mos)
Donations:	249.68	
Interest:	.04	

Balances:

Checking:	3659.00
Savings:	5030.00
Total:	8689.00

[Lacey, if you can hear me, I need your help to finish out the numbers here as usual].

Lacey has also filed the GDCC required report with the OCPF.

Public Service: Mary Kingsley – as reported at the Executive Committee meeting, the Open Door MLK was a success in terms of food packages distributed (365); but organizational pieces including our sign ups need tweaking.

Mary, the Public Benefits summary remains as a vital tool in our GDCC website.

Matt – Agenda Items continued:

Fundraising committee.

Scholarships – would like to give ample awards to all 3, 1,2,and3. Bernadette to head up effort this year. We have already received an application for our scholarships for 2021. Mike Wheeler, Bob Rutchik ,GHS graduates would be glad to help.

Committees needing members : DEI, Fundraising and Scholarship Committees.

Question re scholarships. Why do we give scholarships at all? Versus, e.g., spending money to conduct registration activities?

Mike – we focus on applicants who have performed social service. The scholarships are a commitment to the future. On return, students come back into the organization. One example, Julie LaFontaine at the Open Door. Matt – we have enough money to do both, scholarships and registrations. Lacey – difficult to get access to students at school to do registration work. The admins don't want partisan groups to come in to the school.

Also, to have a political party presence at GHS, need a teacher willing to be a sponsor for the program. Matt – as MA Dems we have access to two people who are good at making the linkage with HS age people:

Kate Donahue who has spoken to us previously – participates with the High School Democrats of America; Dan Kelly from West Springfield who has tuned in to our meetings in the age of Zoom. Also, more local, Michele Kulick has talked about the Manchester experience. The kids get serious about political issues junior year and 18 mos later they are gone.

Obviously, a knot to be worked on going forward.

Dru – put up option of soap box speaker for March; Barbara Kelley, new kid on the block, stepped up.

Matt – Anniversary observed: our last in person meeting was in February, 2020. We have been Zooming since March, 2020.

Adjourned at 8:30, due to early start.

Scribe note: Looking for input on attendance numbers, check on Treasurer's balance figures.