



**Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
March 13, 2016, 2:00-4:00 PM
at Joanne's house**

Attendees:

Joanne Richards (president)
Diane Owens (treasurer)
Teresa Taylor (board member)
Dan Eckam (secretary)
Dave Rawlins

Discussion items:

1. Minutes. We formally approved the previous meeting's minutes, by unanimous vote.

2. Treasurer's report. No change. Current total of our accounts is \$1190.83.

3. Discussion about having members. Dan had earlier asked about why we don't officially have members (aside from board members) and wondered whether having them would help us increase our level of activity. Joanne and others explained our history with the idea. Coffee Party Austin was a membership org., but only because Coffee Party USA had members; we did not sign up anyone new as members. We cleaned up our bylaws to remove suggestions of membership when we changed our name to Common Ground for Texans in 2013.

Joanne read excerpts from two web pages:

http://www.hurwitassociates.com/l_qa_nonprofitgovernance_bylaws.php

<http://www.fundraiserbasic.com/library/fruniv/50-fundraiser-university/advanced/96-how-can-memberships-benefit-my-nonprofit-organization>

-- explaining that there are two main types of members: "corporate" members who have some legal rights in the org; and those who, in exchange for membership fees, receive a benefit, like a newsletter, but have no legal rights.

If we had members, it would be possible that they might have standing to sue us, and could cause great disruption even if they didn't have a strong case. There could be additional issues to worry about to comply with all regulations about membership organizations, such as whether all members would need to be invited to our annual meeting. Texas law does not require a group like ours to have members.

Since Kurt and Mary were not able to attend today, we'll review the question at a future board meeting, but it seemed to all present that changing our bylaws to be a membership org. would be more trouble than it's worth.

4. Update on Democracy Awakening & our April meeting. Joanne attends weekly DA mtgs Tuesdays at 7pm. Space has been reserved at the SW corner of the capitol grounds on April 17. We may get some musical acts to support the event. Coming along slowly. Austin press conference, will be Thursday, April 14. place TBA. DA has 3 major parts: 1. voter engagement & access to voting; 2. money in politics; 3. environment: clean air & water.

Our April 2 event (next general meeting) is about #1 - voter engagement (and disengagement). Speakers will be Cinde Weatherby from LWV-AA, Laura Guerra-Cardus from Children's Defense Fund, Yannis Banks from NAACP; we're trying for LULAC; invited Jim Henson from UT's Texas Politics Project.

5. Our May 14 meeting will focus on efforts to amend the constitution. Kurt Hildebrand will talk about the Texas Plan; Sanford Levinson will be the panel expert. Brainstorming on who else to get for the panel: Gary Breaux for Wolf-PAC? Caroline Homer (or Rochelle Day) for TUTA? Egberto Willies for MTA? Someone who testified in support of Senfronia Thompson's bill? Joanne will contact people to find panelists. Diane will contact Egberto Willies.

6. Planning our June meeting. Dan suggested that talking about the two-party system (its history, pros and cons, prospects for 2016 and beyond, why it persists despite its problems, etc.) would make a good topic of discussion; and volunteered to be a panelist. He also mentioned Professor Daron Shaw, who is a party specialist in UT's Government department (according to Brian Roberts). Joanne will invite him to participate.

7. Should we table at upcoming party conventions? We decided not to, because we don't want to be (mis)perceived as a partisan organization, and because we're still really not a statewide organization and no state conventions will be happening in Austin this year.

8. Planning ahead for September & October. We decided to combine Travis County DA & sheriff races in a multi-partisan candidate forum. We'll find out if the LWV-AA will help out; if so, we'll split the costs with them. We'll plan this either in September or October, depending in part on the availability of LWV to co-host. For the other month, we don't know yet what we'll do -- maybe something **not** related to elections or political parties.

9. Question about scheduling board meetings. Should we meet at the same day & time each month? Joanne wondered whether we should meet before or after our general meetings, to make things more predictable and convenient. Most of us didn't have a strong preference, but several had other things on their schedule before 2pm on Saturdays. We tabled the question until later.

10. Discussing our continuing outreach efforts. We'll now be publishing our general meetings in the Chronicle, the Third Coast Activist mailing list, local Democratic Party mailing lists, and on the NextDoor websites. We also wondered whether Ed English or Roger Borgelt might be able to help get the word out. And we talked about using Meetup.com to promote our meetings. Teresa and Diane already run a Meetup group and each of them will look into whether another one can be added affordably under their account.