

MCDEC Meeting Minutes, July 2020

Call to Order: Carol Ann called the July 21st meeting to order at 6:30. Since Carol Ann was having audio issues through Zoom, Jon facilitated as needed throughout the meeting.

Members and Guests Present: Carol Ann Leonard, Jon Page, Liz Piel, Dave Cross, Sam Hay, Vanetta McConahey, Hank Bonner, Ben Lovelace, Corinna Robinson, Elisa Ackerly, Rey Diaz

General Announcements: Carol Ann reminded Caucus of the following: a) Primary election is August 18. See previous email she forwarded from Eric Buetens and others regarding upcoming election info; b) August 8th is deadline to request a Vote-by-Mail ballot to be mailed to you for the Primary; c) See emails from Ginny and Carol Ann about ballot referendum on Economic Development Incentive Ad Valorem Tax Exemption...Also, for details see <https://bdbmc.org/aug-18-voter-referendum/>; d) A comet is visible with the naked eye (though binoculars help) and will be closest to the earth on 7/22. Look to the northwest before sunrise or after sunset. Find the Big Dipper and look south.

Minutes: Minutes from June meeting were approved.

Treasurer Report: Hank noted current balance is \$460. Funds increased from last month because we had two new members pay the chapter dues and become official members of the MCDEC: Tom Tomlinson and Bridgit Kirouac. Welcome, Tom and Bridgit!!

Guest Speakers: Tonight we were fortunate to have two candidates speak to us who are vying for local office: Elisa Ackerly and Rey Diaz.

Elisa Ackerly is running for House District 82 to fill Rep. Magar's seat. The district runs from the bottom half of Martin County (basically starting at Martin Hwy) down to the northern section of Palm Beach County (down to Donald Ross Rd over toward Juno Beach area). She is hopeful that this year she can garner enough support from Democrats and NPAs to win. She has spoken with Ed O'Connor (who ran for the seat in the last election) and is building her base by speaking with local and state Democratic leaders, attending various local organizations, attending protests (as she did today), and generally trying to get the word out about her candidacy. Her background includes living briefly in the Bahamas as a child and later living in Palm City and then Indiantown

(where she and her husband built their own home), operating their own construction business for several years, and being wife to a firefighter. She has been an activist for many years, has volunteered in many organizations, and is passionate about protecting the environment.

Rey Diaz is running for FL Senate 25. He will be facing Corinna Robinson in the Primary and the winner will be up against Gayle Harrell in the General Election. Senate 25 covers all of St. Lucie and Martin Counties and the western, rural part of Palm Beach County. Rey made the interesting point that if you take Southern Blvd from the coast (where Mar-a-Lago is and head west you go from the wealthiest area through the upper middle class suburban neighborhoods to the rural, largely poor areas around the lake. These rural communities are what is included in Senate 25, areas that he has been supporting for years in various ways.

Rey has spent his life work in the public interest. He has a JD, and he has used this background for environmental advocacy and other public interest pursuits. He is the Lake Worth Waterkeeper and thus has spent his time advocating for clean water, a healthy Everglades, and an overall thriving environment free from development. He is opposed to selective environmental policy in which lower income areas feel the brunt of poor environmental effects, such as being near the lake where there is no statewide warning system for cyanobacteria outbreaks.

In response to Jon's question about the effects of lowering the lake level, Rey noted that it is a balancing act. While doing this may help reduce runoff to the east and west, it does have some effect on the local communities south of the lake. Carol Ann asked about the "savings clause" that big agriculture is wanting added to LOSOM. Rey explained that environmentalists have urged that "public health" be at the top of the priority list so that the water supply is not prioritized for big agriculture at the public's detriment, which historically has been the case. In responding to a question about growth management, Rey pointed out that years ago Florida had a DCA (Dept of Community Affairs) which was the guidebook for Florida on growth and development. It served the state well and helped keep a handle on new development. When Rick Scott came into office, he dismantled that department and set up the DEO (Dept of Economic Opportunity) and this has unfortunately meant that the flood gates have been opened to wide-ranging development. Comp plans are not being enforced. Rey says his record shows that he works with all people, and he will fight corruption and special interests.

Rivers Coalition Update: Meeting on July 23rd. Carol Ann will send out info on that.

Old Business/New Business: The Caucus will need to decide how to proceed with the legislative bills project that we began a few months ago, including whether to attempt a Zoom meeting with Harrell and Overdorf.

Thanks were given to Elisa and Rey for spending their time with us tonight and educating us on their backgrounds and objectives. Good luck to all Democratic candidates!

Meeting Concluded: Sam made motion to dismiss and Liz seconded. Meeting ended at 7:50.