

Northfield Village Caucus
April 18, 2019
Clarkson Lodge – Clarkson Park, Northfield

Minutes

Members attending

David Woodyatt	Cricket Hauf	Jerry Mulick
Mark Gantner	John Green	John Howard
Marsha Balsamo	Dennis Smith	Jeannie Scully
Tom Bolling	Bill Gould	Dave Fullerton
Ericka Foster	Genie Cooper	Jonathan Don

Guests

David Miller	Tom Terrill	Charles Orth
Barnaby Dinges	Tom Whittaker	Kim Orth

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair David Woodyatt.

1. Approval of January 31, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Dennis Smith; Second: Jerry Mulick

Vote: Approved by voice, no dissents

2. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's Report was presented by Treasurer Mark Gantner who stated that the current balance is \$1,121.86. This has not changed since the last meeting, since there have no deposits or withdrawals from the account. David Woodyatt highlighted that no Caucus funds were used in connection with election. Yard signs were provided by the candidates and flyers were contributed by the membership.

3. Membership Report

Marsha Balsamo, Chair of the Membership Committee, presented Kim Orth, Barnaby Dinges, and David Miller for membership. Their biographies were conveyed at the meeting and each prospective member introduced themselves. Kim Orth has been a resident of Northfield for twelve years. She previously lived in Chicago. Prior to her retirement she worked in the cosmetics and real estate industries. She will provide an additional voice representing the east side of the Village. David Miller has lived in Northfield for one year. He relocated from Wilmette, where he served as president of the park district. He works in commercial real estate. Barnaby Dinges is an advocacy consultant. He expressed an appreciation for the Park District's Wednesday events and the long range planning by the Village government. He would like to see more community involvement of the residents, particularly by younger people. David Woodyatt indicated that their membership would be put forward for vote at the next meeting in July. He mentioned that in the course of canvassing for the slate he was surprised by the apparent lack of awareness of the Trustee election in the Meadowview neighborhood. He suggested that prospects for membership be sought out in this area.

4. Election Discussion

David Woodyatt solicited the views on the recent Trustee election – and specifically opinions regarding the Caucus's efforts and the impact on election results. He welcomed participation by the guests in this discussion.

A range of perspectives was shared. The views contributed included the following:

- It was speculated that because of dissatisfaction with development of the AT&T property, some residents would have voted for anyone not associated with the Village Board. This may have reflected on any candidates recommended by the Village Caucus, since it had a role in the vetting of current Board members.
- Although the project was rejected by the Village Board, it was felt that the mental health facility proposed to be installed in the office building on Willow east of the Edens Expressway was another source of concern by the residents.
- Tom Terrill, Village Trustee, felt it was unlikely that the Board would have ever approved the project as presented for the Willow Road building. Regarding the development of the AT&T site, although he was personally against it, he observed that it came to the Board with the approval of two commissions.
- There was a discussion of Village communication and the best way for real issues to be publicized. There were perceived divisions noted between Northfield east and west of the Edens Expressway, school districts, and residents living close to sensitive projects and the rest of the community.
- The Caucus's role was considered. The view was expressed that the Caucus served as a filtering process, performing the function of an independent advisory committee in the slating of candidates. It was questioned whether it was the Caucus's proper place to take positions on real estate projects being considered by the Village Board.
- The observation was made that if there were no Caucus, there would not have been sufficient names on the ballot for Village offices. This highlights the important role played by Caucus role in finding qualified individuals and reviewing them through the cross section of the community in its membership. The question was then posed regarding candidates that did not go through the process.
- It was noted that because there has not been a contested election of trustees for over thirty years, there was no anticipation or preparation during the slating process to mount an aggressive campaign. In the future, should slated candidates be made aware that their active participation is required? The question was raised regarding how far the Caucus should go in managing campaigns.
- Some members felt it was a close election and only informed residents voted. It was further speculated that the effort put out by the contesting candidates was the reason for their success.
- David Woodyatt asked for any opinions on that fact that many people didn't use all three votes for office of trustee. The feeling was expressed that people tend to vote only for the names they are familiar with. There was also an opinion held by some that this was caused by more strategic objectives.
- There was a discussion of the removal of campaign signs. It was pointed out that this may have been due to some signs being placed in parkways and locations without the property Owner's permission. Multifamily residences such as the Landmark and Meadow Lake have

covenant prohibiting this kind of signage. Overall it was felt that most of the signs had remained where placed.

- David Woodyatt asked for any opinions concerning the format of the signs. Would campaigning with separate signs for each candidate have been more effective than listing all the Caucus candidates together? Some members indicated that choice of font and format might influence name recognition. The view was also expressed that there were a blizzard of signs on all sides and this alone may not have been a factor in a candidate's success. This again raised a question of the role of the Caucus in managing campaigns or simply vetting good candidates.
- The view was expressed that the Caucus had some obligation to support the candidates. Based on the procurement of signs and flyers, David Woodyatt felt that one-third of the Caucus members made a significant support effort, one-third made the requested effort, and one-third apparently none at all. It was recognized that some members may have been out of town.
- David Woodyatt wondered whether the biennial change of Caucus officers dictated by the Bylaws to take place in January could have an impact on the election. He expressed the desire to consider this in the pending review of the Bylaws.
- The role of the slated candidates in the campaign was also discussed. In view of the possibility that future elections could also be contested, should a prospective candidate's desire to mount an active campaign be discussed during the vetting process? Should the Caucus be clear on what specific support it is prepared to provide in a campaign?
- The opinion was expressed that the Caucus must be more visible in the community. Any misperception that the Caucus is not diverse should also be addressed. A discussion ensued regarding the Internet and the Caucus's website. The site had been inaccessible for a few weeks due to complications in a change of webpage hosting. However, the impact may not have been significant since the site receives very few visitors. It was commented that potentially better use of social media may need to be explored.
- David Woodyatt solicited opinions on if there was any benefit in using separate flyers for each candidate. Responses to his question supported promoting the slate together. Regarding the flyer, some members expressed concern that canvassers could communicate the Caucus's endorsement and biographical information, but they were not necessarily knowledgeable about each candidate's stand on particular issues. It was noted that in contested elections the League of Women Voters has played a role in staging a forum for candidate presentation. In this election the Winnetka Current asked each campaigner to make a statement and one Caucus candidate chose not to participate. There was speculation that most people in the Village may not even know that the Board is elected. A discussion followed touching on the question of the Caucus's role in dealing with public apathy.
- Members then shared opinions regarding the value of active campaigning by the candidates, meet and greets, and various tactical approaches.

5. Organization Structure Discussion

- David Woodyatt viewed the function of the Nominating Committee as being of extreme importance to the Caucus. He will name a Chair and solicited volunteers to serve on the committee. He would like to see six people, keeping some old members for continuity and adding some new. He reiterated that this committee is at the core of what we do.

- David indicated that he would like to deal with Bylaws and the Platform as a group. He requested that the members go to the Caucus website to obtain a copy of the Bylaws (under Governance/Organization Governance) and review this document for the next general meeting in July. He asked the members to provide any opinions on changing the timing of the installation of Caucus officers from the Annual Meeting in January until after the election cycle.
- David informed the group that the Village Finance Director will be a guest at the Caucus's general meeting in July and he will provide information on the Village Budget. Advance material from the FY 2019-20 Public Hearing was handed out.

6. Reports from members on Village Meetings

- The development of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan was discussed. Workshops took place in November and April in which Caucus members participated. It was emphasized that the public review of the final draft document is scheduled for September. Caucus members were strongly encouraged to obtain a copy of the tentative Plan when it becomes available and to participate in this process to assist the consultant in preparing the final document for Board approval.
- The Village Board approved the budget at the last meeting. In the March Board meeting the Walden Lane/Willow Road project was approved with ten single family homes on an area of approximately five acres. Wetlands and water retention are included in the scope of the work.
- Village Clean-Up day is scheduled for April 27.
- The new Trustees will be installed at the next Board Meeting at 7 p.m. on May 21.

7. New Business

David Woodyatt asked if there was any new business and none was offered. The meeting then moved to adjournment.

8. Adjournment

Motion: John Green; Second: Cricket Hauff

Vote: Approved by voice, no dissents

Respectfully submitted by
Jonathan Don,
Acting Secretary for Keith Reed