

Beach Cities Democrats
November 27, 2021 Meeting
Minutes taken by Andrea Valcourt, Secretary

Jessica Accamando called the meeting to order at 7:04 and Ashley Tull lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Jessica then welcomed the Redondo Beach candidates seeking our endorsement. We usually have a party in January and people pay their dues then, but the year is July to June. You can pay on our website or send a check.

Please remember to mail your ADEM ballots, so they arrived by February 3. She then noted that it was Dency Nelson's birthday. He said to celebrate got his shot yesterday and Moira got hers on Sunday. We went to the Forum and it was very well organized. I know it's difficult, but be diligent and keep trying to get an appointment. We've already got a date for our second shot.

Jessica asked for announcements and Connie said that the PV Dems are meeting February 21 at 2:30 and will discuss how schools can open during the covid pandemic.

Jessica explained that the voting will be done via text message. Anyone, who has been a member for less than 30 days cannot vote and there are seven people. Ashley will help with the voting and tabulating. To be endorsed, you need 60% of the votes. Connie will advise us of who else is running for the various races. Each candidate will have three minutes, so let's get started.

Mayor Bill Brand, running for re-election

It's great to see so many of you. Redondo has elected an elected mayor. If Lowenstein and I had not been elected, we'd have a Mall by the Sea. A lot of law suits followed and we're winning them. Things are looking good for next four years. Looking at revitalizing the waterfront, the Galleria and the Artesia Corridor are coming, opening outdoor dining again, and hospitals are getting less patients. Excited about the next four years. We'll balance the budget and keep fire and police departments. I'm trying to get the AES extension stopped. The State Legislature is trying to take away city zoning control by passing legislation to allow developers to split lots in two and we need to fight back. Hermosa is the most densely populated in the South Bay with Redondo not far behind. I want Redondo to purchase the land under the Edison lines for park area. I will continue to fight efforts to make us Santa Monica.

Connie stated that there are three running against Bill, one is a democrat and none are present.

Dency makes a motion to endorse Bill by acclamation and Kathryn Campbell seconds it.

It is noted that this is not a private vote and Dency says that this is the only club that has found a way to keep it private and I applaud it. Then, some discussion about and help for voting via text. Jessica said we will wait for the results, while Harden speaks, since some are having trouble with the new process.

Harden Sooper, running for City Attorney

Thanks for having me. I'm endorsed by LACDP. I've lived here 13 years and am married with three boys, who attend local schools. I went to USC and joined the ROTC and then the California National Guard, serving as a JAG. I was a LA Deputy DA, covering gang-related murders. I'm a Neighborhood Block Captain. It is unusual for a City Attorney to be elected, but it's good to have a choice. Webb is one of the highest paid elected officials, more than Newsom and has been running unopposed. Many don't

feel their voice is heard. It is a winnable race. I've raised \$25,000 and plan to raise more. I think it's good to have a change and am excited to run and bring that change.

Connie stated that Harden is the only candidate running against Mike Webb.

Dency made a motion to endorse and Lori Geittmann seconded it.

The results are Brand 92% and Harden 74%, so both are endorsed and will be added to our socials tomorrow.

Brad Waller, running for City Council, District 1

I'm a life time democrat and a new member here. Endorsed by the LACDP and Al Muratsuchi. My opponent is a Libertarian, who worked against Al. I have strong relationships with Al, Ben Allen and David Hadley. I've worked for children 15 years in SoCal and DC as well as in Redondo and have helped the homeless and the environment. I'm willing talk with anyone.

Kathryn pointed out that Nils has been endorsed by Bill Brand, Janice Hahn, and fellow councilmembers. Brad replied that he had the endorsement of Laura Emdee, Brand, and others. I've worked on the Infrastructure Board with Bill. I'm here to represent Democratic values.

Barbara Epstein said that she won't endorse Brad because she thinks Nils has done a fantastic job and getting rid of school property is against her beliefs. Brand stated that since he's been on the School Board, they have not gotten rid of any property and the board doesn't believe in it either.

Zein Obagi added that Nils did a good job with the pandemic. Brand has to veto bills because Laura Emdee and her block for expansion.

Connie interjected that Brad is a Democrat and we only vote for Democrats and Nils is a Libertarian, who actively worked against Al Muratsuchi. Brad is smart and well respected. If we don't vote for him, it's a de facto vote for a libertarian.

Anita Avrech said that it was unfair to guess how Brad will vote. I'm on the Board with Brad and we don't get rid of land; we rent it out such as the Kensington property, which brings the school district a lot of income. We don't always agree, but he's always does his homework.

Greg Anderson called for a point of order, if we don't live in the district, can we still vote. Jessica said yes.

Christian Horvath said that Redondo Beach is always divisive, but our council often votes unanimously, especially on land use issues vs Sacramento. This is about voting for a democratic endorsement or not.

Toby Reder asked what Brad's position was on the homeless. Brad replied that the pallet project is a great start for helping the homeless and getting them off the street. The pallets have heat and air. I'd love to keep the program and make it sustainable.

Lori said that she lived in District 1 and she and her neighbors are very concerned about all the PCH construction and the related traffic problems. She asked if she understood it correctly that Franklin school would not be sold. Brad responded, yes. The construction on PCH is controlled by Cal Trans.

Don Elder stated that he's known Brad for years and that he has been very active in all the schools. He's a thoughtful and active in public service. Bob Pinzler replied at he knows how Brad has voted on land issues and Nils is better for Redondo.

Ashley said Brad you seem like a good guy and honorable. You deserve a chance. If we go by being a democrat, you got my vote.

Then, she asked Bill why he backed Nils? Bill responded it's about policy. Bard was not fighting for our waterfront when Nils did. I won't endorse a pers, how won't say where they stand. Brad didn't support Arthur Schaper. Brad is nice, but it's about policy. Candise Nafissi added that Brad is nice, but endorsed Scotto, when he ran against Al. I served with Nils to save the Water Front. Brad missed a chance to endorse open space. I'd move for no endorsement.

Dency said that he would endorse Brad. I was part of the Water Front collation. I'm with Connie, Al, and the party. We are here to endorse Democrats, not Libertarians. Nils might not support democratic values, but Brad will. Tod Lowenstein added that Brad succeeded him on the School Board. Land use is very important and the school district is overcrowded and affects traffic and the environment. Nils should not be maligned because he stands for a lot of democratic values.

Jessica stated that we will now take the vote.

Brad interjected that he was taken aback by the process. I think it's inappropriate to debate me and my opponent. The School Board had to vote according to the law. We did long term studies and made plans. I'm running for city council and would like the endorsement for that.

Zein made the first motion to endorse Brad and Dency seconded it. Brad was endorsed with 69% of the vote.

Paul David Moses, running for City Council, District 2

Paul said he was running because he loves Redondo. I have been a resident for 30 years and was born at Little Company of Mary. I want to break the stagnation and it's a tough choice with three democrats running. I've championed the Democrats and Joe Biden since 1988. Last year, I worked for the Census and was the only team to reach all our residents. We pulled off six months of work in six weeks. In Fresno, it was undercounted and may help Nunez. I've always tried to fight for housing, served on and helped found the Art Commission. My wife is a member.

Todd Lowenstein, running for City Council, District 2

Todd said he's a life long Democrat and has been actively involved since 2004, was on the School Board between 2005 and 2013 leading the call to rebuild our schools. He's endorsed by Ben Allen, Al Muratsuchi, Janice Hahn, the Sierra Club, LA Dems, police and fire. Todd's worked against the Mall, worked for environmental issues such as 50% renewable energy, fought for the Artesia corridor, supported labor unions, and helped pass election spending limits.

Ericka Snow Robinson, running for City Council, District 2

Ericka said she's a mom, a building painter, and a 20-year volunteer. She wants something to happen, to work together for all of Redondo Beach, to work with AES, so we all get something. There are a lot of broken promises because the Council didn't make it happen. I worked against Heart of the City and

can't believe we still don't have a solution. She doesn't want to obstruct. The bluest candidate is Moses.

Connie reported there are three Democrats running.

Zein asked Ericka if she wrote to the California Energy Commission against the Power Plant? No. I feel like this is about demanding now and I'd like to get to a more conciliatory tone.

Ashley asked what Ericka meant by saying Moses is the Bluest Democrat? She replied, I think he is the bluest.

Bill stated that this is a misrepresentation of what happened with AES. The owner offered to sell 25 acres and we worked with the County, Al Muratsuchi, Ben Allen to buy the land. Joe on the Water Board said there should be an extension, so the owner withdrew the offer. The Board extended without an EIR. We don't know how long this will go on. Was three year and now down to one year. It's zoned as a park and he needs to clean it up. It's very complicated.

Jessica interjected that we've discussed this a lot. Any other questions?

Tony said that Todd served on the School Board and City Council and we've endorsed him every time. I don't know these candidates. Moses said our endorsements were a joke, but he thought we endorsed the wrong person. Moses replied that he made a mistake and apologized.

Dency said that the Club rules require 60% for an endorsement. It is something that often happens, that we do not endorse. It is a difficult bar to reach. Todd is a long-endorsed member.

Candice said she had a question. Measure B was very contentious; what is your position on it? Moses replied that he supported B. He wants the plant to close and B was the best opportunity. Ericka replied that she voted for B. She thought it was away forward.

Candice then said that Todd pushed for B and is supported by the Sierra Club. I'll endorse him. Connie added that Todd had obviously done his homework on B and I'll endorse him.

The voting text rules were given: 1 for Moses, 2 for Todd, 3 for Ericka, 4 for no endorsement
Todd was endorsed with 76% of the vote.

Jessica thanked everyone who showed up. I hope you will become members and let us get to know you better.

Zein Obagi, running for City Council, District 4

Zein said he grew up in WLA and attended USC Law School and has a law firm, which represents employees who have been discriminated against. He said he's endorsed by Mike Lavine, but Janice Hahn has not endorsed this race. He is running because he thinks we can do better. Artesia was not great and is worse now. We need to make streets safer. Schools are crowded and we can't take on more housing than we can handle. I leaned with Bill to oppose a new power plant to replace AES. Our leaders need to be activists and make things happen.

John Gran, running for City Council, District 4

John stated that he became a Democrat at 18 and it has been a life long committed. Four years ago, you didn't endorse me, but I've showed up at every meeting. I've walked for Al Muratsuchi and now he endorses me. Janice can't endorse this race due to pressure from Brad. I was smiling when I ran down all the Democratic things we've done. I've been against the refinery and I'm with Brand on land use. I'm asking for your endorsement because I show up. I think Tony should recuse himself because he worked for Brand.

Dency said that he and John worked for Al and we're very grateful for his help and participation. I'm inclined to support Zein because of the collation to move things forward in Redondo. I almost always agree with the coalition's positions.

Rachel stated that she agrees with Zein that Redondo should not take on more on housing. Zein replied that we have a lot of density and we're under parked. I've heard from parent that the schools are overcrowded. We can't take on more.

Candice asked John his position on Measures B and C regarding the water front. John replied that he voted for Measure B because it was the only way to get rid of the power plant and before he was in politics. He didn't vote for C and am against the waterfront. As a councilman, I was silent on it because it was the law. I want to work for the water front even though I live in North Redondo. I go to the water front often. Zein then said didn't you say the water front is not a North Redondo issue. John replied no, I didn't say that.

Ashley said that she googled both of them and continued John you've been very busy and I'm impressed with what you've done. I think it takes a lot of courage to go against the Big Dog in the room. I'm endorsing you. Zein, I appreciated all that you've done.

Tony stated that he is Zein's manager and I'm very impressed with him. I recused myself at the LACDP meeting, but there is no rule for me to not vote here, even though I work for Zein.

Peter Aziz said to Zein, you've recently moved here and I'm curious to know what you offer besides demonizing the homeless on social media. Zein replied that his wife works in OC and I in LA. We want to raise our daughter in a great place. Artesia is a fast street and people come down the side streets fast. We need to slow the traffic. I hear people are upset by the traffic and are stressed out by it. Let cars through, but slow it down. Realtors can't sell a property because of zoning laws. We need to look about changing them. John said that he appreciates Zein's support of the homeless.

Bob Pinzler stated that he was a Councilman between 1994 and 2001 for District 4 and worked hard to take Artesia from Cal Trans. I never thought it would be worse now. It is disappointing to see and part of Grans' resume. John replied that he appreciated Bob's service, but said you have the facts wrong. The Galleria got a five to zero vote. It doesn't matter, who speaks on the council, it's how you vote. We have long term neglect in the city. We negotiated with the Galleria and the mayor.

Bill interjected on Measure B and the water front. John is for Big Business. Measure B was not the way to get rid of the Power Plant. Zein was arguing long before B. It will go away; we will keep working it. Doug Boswell appealed the Galleria and it's why we don't have a big development. Zein has worked a longtime, since 2012.

Todd added that we need someone to fight for the people. John attacked Boswell and voted against election dollar limits and the plastic ban. John hasn't fought for the residents, but John is a nice guy. John said that he didn't agree with Bill on a number of things. I think a two year resident is not good for Redondo.

Ashely said that she can't afford to buy in Redondo or Hermosa. I'd like to have a mall with a movie theater. They bring in revenue and we need more money here. Poor people spend money, millionaires need to spend more.

Zein thanked John for recognizing his position on the homeless and said we've run a pretty good campaign.

Jessica called for the vote; not needing a motion when there were more than one candidate seeking an endorsement. No one received an endorsement. The vote was Zein 57%, John 33% and no endorsement 10%. Now, we move to the school board.

Rachel Silverman Nemeth, running for School Board

Rachel said she's lived in Redondo for 22 years and has two children and two nieces in the school district, and is a family law lawyer. She wants to keep Redondo at the top of California schools. Rachel added that she wants to be an advocate for children and foster relationships with the children, school board, and teachers. and wants to mitigate learning loss and emotional issues. She would also like to make it easier for juniors to access college information.

Margo Trone, running for School Board

Margo said she's lived in Redondo since 2005 and has three children. She is passionate about schools and parents having a voice in the decisions. She wants to help with learning loss, kids with an IEP, and working to get kids back into school. There needs to be more options for parents and getting the kids back into school. Margo added that she founded the Dual Language foundation, and works with the South Bay Equity Project and Washington School Equity Project, and is on the PTA Executive Board. She is endorsed by Bill Brand, Barbara, and Jason Boxer.

Dan Elder, running for School Board

Dan said he appreciates the opportunity and is endorsed by the Democratic Party and active Democrats. We have increased enrollment and we are going to have to work hard to get things back to normal. He's the Legislative Chair and the mascot for Lincoln Elementary school, Chair of the Redondo Planning commission, and a Neighborhood Watch Block Captain. Being involved with the PTA gave me a good view of how schools, parents and teachers can work together. He is concerned about how to get kids back into school.

Jason Boxer speaking on behalf of Kim Isaacs, running for School Board

Jason said that he is on the Manhattan Beach School board and he and the Democratic Party endorse Kim. She has a good track record and is qualified to deal with school budget issues. Kim helped get the pallet project and founded the Diversity Committee at City Charter Middle School and is on the Redondo Equality Committee. Redondo has a chance to say we heard the need for more equity.

Connie then stated that two Democrats did not seek an endorsement.

Jessica said we have four candidates seeking endorsement and three seats, so you can vote for three candidates and one person will not get endorsed.

Greg Anderson had a question for all the candidates. He said his daughter is a product of Redondo schools. His three grandkids are in Redondo schools and they are currently learning at home. I'm a credentialed teacher, I have observed their classes, and some teachers are poor. I want to correct that; they are losing students. What are you going to do to help these kids now and in the Fall, when they move on to the next grade?

Rachel said that we agree there's a leaning loss and emotional problems. We are working on how to help. I think we need extra money for these issues.

Dan replied I agree. We are missing the data on where the kids are. We're going to need intervention. We get very little Title 1 money.

Margo stated that she attends the School Board meetings. We don't have all the data, but we do have it on Math. We could have tutors and summer school. I think the help will need to be individualized.

Anita said she knows most of the people running, but not Kim. Dan and Rachel are very qualified.

Jason responded that there are California funds being allocated for tutoring to mitigate the learning loss. Kim will be good on the money aspect.

Ashley said that we shouldn't be worried about the kids. They are resilient. I've never met a teacher, who was gay and/or diverse. The candidates, who spoke about diversity, I'm for them.

Rachel said I think that diversity is important. I'd like to see more women on the Board. There is a Board Member working on diversity and he said that some say this makes them uncomfortable. I'm interested in getting on that committee.

Dan added that if you don't see people like you, how do you know you fit? The PTA has an International Night, with many countries represented. I want to work on this.

Candice said that the District is really great at a lot of things. It also has some inherent weakness. It is hard for them to take criticism. My hesitation is that some candidates are endorsed by the Board, which doesn't listen to parents. Margo has my endorsement. We'd like to have parents involved with the reopening of classes and there's not good communication on this.

Dan stated that there are parents on the committee. The problem is the rules change and insurance needs to be in place. We're trying to adjust to a changing situation.

Brad added that we listen to parents, getting hundreds of emails and responding to everyone. We have to follow the law. As for reopening the schools, all candidates have implored the District to stay closed. I saw Dan and Rachel, and encouraged them to get involved. That's why they are endorsed. They know how to work with the Administration.

Peter said he worked with Special Needs Students and IEP students, and asked what kind of support will IEP kids get? They could need more help.

Dan replied we've been talking about his. We have a lot of kids. With the cohort rules, it makes it difficult to support these kids. We need money and resources for this.

Rachel responded that she agreed with Dan. I often see IEP kids in my practice. I'm dedicated to getting the money to help these kids.

Margo stated that it is emotionally difficult with these kids. I have experience with getting funding. It is not just the money. The teacher is the most important help for children with these needs. We could leverage resources with Children's Hospital and the BCHD. We need to change the culture and get the kids' needs included. Kim will be good with that.

Jessica then called for the vote to endorse or not endorse, with voting for a maximum of three candidates.

These candidates are endorsed Rachel with 64%, Dan with 72%, and Kim with 67%. Margo was not endorsed with 50%, which is below the 60% requirement.

Jessica thanked everyone for coming and said she hoped they would come back and give elected reports.

Brad said he could give a School Board update. The plan is to reopen schools February 2. The School Board is working behind the scenes to get Seniors back on campus. We opened a child care center for healthcare workers. Kids had an easy time learning to wear masks. No campus transmissions yet.

Jessica thanked him for his report and encourage everyone to become a member. She adjourned the meeting at 10:56.