

Minutes
GPVA Business Meeting
Teleconference
25 October 2020

12 MEMBERS AND 0 GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE:
(An asterisk * denotes a local representative.)
(Corresponding timestamps on the recording are listed in parentheses.)

Arlington: Kirit Mukherjee (treasurer)
At-Large: Andrew Franke
Blue Ridge: Charlie Jordan*
Fairfax: Dianne Blais*, Jonah Thomas (webmaster), Jim Lowenstern
Fredericksburg (inactive): none
Hampton Roads: Kyle Rockett*, Tina Rockett (co-chair), Blaizen Bloom (press-secretary)
Loudoun (inactive): none
Lynchburg: B. Sidney Smith (Gen. Secretary)
New River Valley: Steven Gillespie*, Ryan Wesdock (co-chair)
Richmond: none
Shenandoah: Tom Yager*

Guests: none.

Meeting convened at 1pm

facilitator: Ryan Wesdock
time-keeper: Kyle Rockett
vibes-watcher: Dianne Blais

(1:00) Agenda ratified by consensus

(3:00) The minutes of the August meeting were accepted.

REPORTS:

(4:00) Co-chairs: Ryan reported that he had sent to the list-serve elements for the strategic plan. Tina reported that 5 press releases had been put out since the last meeting. She had an enquiry from the Castleton festival, an art and political festival, who wanted to highlight Howie Hawkins and Angela Walker, and she put them in touch with the candidates. Also an ad has been placed in the Hampton Roads paper to promote the Hawkins campaign. They gave us a break on the price, including color at no charge. She had a call from the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and referred them to Sid because he was involved most closely with the lawsuit we participated in for ballot access. She was also in contact with Victoria Ronnau of the Virginia Network for Environmental Rights to partner with them to promote individual rights and to overthrow Dylan's Rule.

(9:15) Kirit gave the treasurer's report. There are now five monthly sustainers, including Dianne, Tina and Kyle Rockett, Sid, and Caesar Cordero. Kirit said he thinks advertising such as Tina mentioned

HRGP doing seems a very good idea, and our treasury can support such expenditures, as well as hosting lectures, paying for meeting spaces, etc.

(12:00) Sid gave the General Secretary's report. He said there are still 7 active locals: Arlington, Blue Ridge, Fairfax, Hampton Roads, Lynchburg, New River Valley, and Shenandoah. The website has been updated with the bylaws change for dues and fully participating members. There is a new data field on the page for people to edit their own information which members can use to show when they have updated their information on the site. This is the date he will use when calculating how many fully-participating members each local has. Kirit will also be providing dues information (not the amounts paid) to the Gen. Secretary for this purpose. He reported that only about a dozen people have updated their information and few have paid dues. It will be important that people do so or we will fail to have quorum at future meetings. Regarding ODIHR, Sid reported that they sent an observation team by invitation of the U.S. government, as they have done for several election cycles; he spoke with them in 2016 and again this year, and they have already published an interim report available at <https://www.csce.gov/international-impact/osce-election-observers-release-2020-preliminary-findings-united-states-general>. Sid said that he didn't find the report very informative, but that it is a good thing for the GPVA to participate in.

Charlie Jordan said that he was concerned about the requirements for fully-participating members coming too soon to allow people to get their dues in. Sid replied that there was nothing in the language about delaying the effect of the bylaw change. Ryan suggested that additional comments on this issue should wait until the time set aside in the agenda for discussion of dues. Jim Lowenstern said he was not comfortable paying dues online and asked if he could just send a check. Sid responded that it is not necessary to use the web site at all; contact info can be mailed or emailed to the general secretary and dues can be sent to Kirit directly. Tina asked for confirmation that it is not necessary to ask for permission to pay less than the recommended amount, and Sid confirmed this. Tina asked if people would be notified when it was time to update their information. Sid replied that he would remind people to check their info when the agendas for meetings go out. Tina also asked about under-age members, and Sid asked if the local could just notify him about underage members. Dianne asked if there were any other election watch organizations that have contacted GPVA in the past. Sid said that ODIHR was the only one during his time with the party.

(24:30) Sid and Tina gave the GPUS Delegates report. Sid reported that there is controversy over proposals with respect to the affiliation status of GP Alaska and GP Rhode Island, both of whom refused to try to get our presidential candidate on their respective state ballots. Tina reported that the Code of Conduct proposal was pulled because of people feeling that the looming election left too little bandwidth for a full discussion.

(26:00) Blaizen gave the Press Secretary's report. He said that GPVA had released four press releases since the last meeting. The first was on the DNC delegates rejecting the DNC platform. The second was on Hawkins' write-in campaign and how to correctly write him in on the ballots. A statement was published for Labor Day. Finally there was a statement in response to the Democratic Governors' Statement on Democracy, highlighting its hypocrisy.

OLD BUSINESS:

(31:00) Confirmation of Interim Business.

Recommended Dues: Andrew Franke asked for clarification about whether the amount paid affected membership status, and Ryan affirmed that it makes no difference in membership status. Tina noted that studies have shown that most people will endeavor to meet the expectation or exceed it even when the amount given is anonymous. Charlie said that among his many concerns was that we might find ourselves painted into a corner with respect to quorum, and asked if we should wait before adopting the dues proposal. Sid replied that the payment of dues is already part of the bylaws, having been voted on in August; the only thing to be decided today was the recommended amount. Charlie replied that if we didn't adopt the recommended amount, then members could pay \$0 and still be considered fully-participating. Kirit replied that there are two parts of the fully-participating requirement. The first is for the member to update their information on an annual basis, and this stands regardless of what dues are paid. Sid affirmed that the requirement to pay dues and update their information is already "on the books." Some amount must be paid, and all that is being decided today is what amount to recommend. Ryan pointed out that there will be two or three months until the next business meeting, giving plenty of time for locals to encourage their members to become fully-participating. Charlie raised a blocking concern that we are administratively unprepared to implement the dues requirement at this time. Tina said that she thinks Charlie's concern is going to be addressed, since the next time this will affect any type of vote will be at the next meeting in several months. A voice vote recorded 11 yes votes and 1 no vote (from Blue Ridge).

NEW BUSINESS:

OFFICER ELECTIONS:

(53:00) There was a discussion of sample ballots. It was emphasized that coloring in the circle next to the blank space, as well as writing in the name, is important since the ballots are machine counted. Ryan noted that we should be prepared to distribute them in person, so we should make files available for people to print and distribute. Sid offered to make a PDF. At Charlie's request he offered to make an extra one for Roanoke to indicate our preference for the endorsed candidate Keisha Preston. Steve Gillespie suggested we should also provide guidance to vote NO on Amendment 1. Dianne Blais took exception, saying she thought the amendment should be supported, and noted that we haven't held a vote on the matter in GPVA. Ryan spoke in detail about defects in the amendment, saying that the commission it proposes to create would be under the sole control of Democrats and Republicans, so it is not genuinely independent. Dianne said it is still an improvement over the status quo. Kirit said he was also in favor of the amendment. Tina said she does not support the amendment, but understands that it would be problematic for GPVA to publish a position when there is disagreement among us. Charlie asked how many ballots were to be printed and how they would be paid for. He also said he was not aware that GPVA has had any official discussion of Amendment 1. Sid confirmed this, and noted that the sample ballots would be distributed electronically. Ryan agreed that we should not attempt to publish a GPVA position on Amendment 1, or include it on the sample ballot. He said that he has made a spreadsheet to help people know when and where to distribute the sample ballots at the voting precincts, and suggested we should have talking points. Sid noted that in Virginia Biden is ahead of Trump by about 13 points, so anyone in Virginia should feel free to cast their vote for Hawkins, and certainly should if they want their vote to have an impact. Charlie asked if anyone has run into Trumpists and if anyone has advice for how to deal with them when they show up at the polls. Jim said that there had been trouble at a Fairfax precinct.

(1:17:00) Election Night Watch Party: The Yagers offered to use their Zoom account to allow us to have a virtual watch party, starting around 8pm.

(1:20:30) Dianne and Tina reported on the presidential debate that Hawkins participated in on the Free and Equal Elections website, and encourage people to watch the debates (there were three altogether). Hawkins was the only participant on enough ballots to earn a winning number of electors.

(1:25:15) Strategic Plan. Ryan noted that he had posted an update on the draft and fielded some suggestions for improvements. He said the goal of having a strategic plan is to provide a template for reference by state and local Greens in allocating their time and resources, and to recognize when goals have been achieved. The elements of the draft include having at least 10 locals with at least 3 fully-participating members in each, updating the platform, getting at least 5% of the statewide vote in the governor's election in 2021, and to pass an annual budget. Sid noted that we have a natural annual cycle in the GPVA, such as the elections at the first meeting of the year, and that we had a strategic planning meeting a couple years back, with an informal discussion about where we should go strategically. He said that maybe we should institute a regular cycle for both the strategic plan and budget, which could perhaps be done in the summer meeting, held in person, with the kinds of things that draw the membership to the meeting. Jim said with COVID it's hard to gather signatures, and that this might make it tough to get organized for the governor election. We might look at other options for a statewide office, such as lieutenant governor or attorney general, to get to 5%. Charlie noted that an attorney general candidate would have to have a law license, five years of experience, and be at least 30 years old. The governor and lieutenant governor don't have these requirements. He also said he thinks the threshold for ballot access is 10%. Ryan said he agreed with Sid that we should do this regularly on an annual basis, and summer sounds fine. Whether we need to put this in the bylaws is unclear. Sid said that because there is budgeting involved there should be some formality about it. Also, if it's on a fiscal year basis then a summer time for it makes sense. He recommended that the chairs suggest a strategic plan, and that it be discussed and voted on, and that the chairs and treasurer could also propose a budget in connection with the plan so they can be approved together. Ryan noted that it was not necessary to decide anything now, but endorsed the idea of doing this regularly in the summer, and Tina seconded this. Kirit said he liked the four points in Ryan's draft. He noted that a statewide race needs a long planning period. Regarding the budget, Kirit said we have an opportunity with dues coming in, to collaborate with locals, so locals should consider ideas for initiatives, especially with media to grow the party. Steve pointed out that running a statewide race and getting 10% would be a great boon, and that we can also accomplish this by getting to that threshold in either of the two U.S. Senate races. He said he thinks it would also be worthwhile to focus the state party on state business, such as the legislative agenda of the General Assembly, and also to get at least one person elected to the state house. He pointed out that Lee Carter, who is a member of DSA, got elected and this has helped raise the visibility of DSA. Tom Yager said that the strategic plan is good, and that we should start looking ahead now to 2023, which will be the biggest year for local elections, together with the entire state legislature, and the soil and water conservation boards. Tina pointed out that DSA is not a party, just an organization.

(1:47:40) Media. Blaizen said he would like to start an Instagram account for GPVA, because it is much more used among youth. He said this would help recruiting among the young. Tina added that we can also promote our YouTube videos on Instagram. Sid pointed out that the press secretary and chairs can make this decision, and that there is no need for a vote unless someone has an objection. Tina asked that anyone who has experience with Instagram should get in touch with Blaizen. Ryan affirmed that keeping up social media trends is very important, so this is a very good thing to do, and that we should work to ensure we can generate enough content to keep it active. Kirit asked what about Twitch? (His nephews are mostly on Twitch.) Blaizen said he thought it was a good idea, but we would need someone who can step up and do that. Tina said that as we get more volunteers the more platforms we can be active on. Steve noted that the job of the press secretary is to disseminate statements to the

press, and asked if the press has picked up on anything we've put out. Blaizen said that all our press releases have been sent to media outlets across the state, but that he's not aware that any have used them. Tina suggested that members write letters to the editor from a Green perspective, and that any time people identify an important issue that is timely they should reach out to the press secretary and chairs about it. Also, liking and sharing our posts on social media helps overcome the algorithmic bias against progressive messaging. She noted that there was a time when HRGP could boost its messaging and reach many thousands of people, but that now they have a very hard time reaching more than a few dozen. Dianne asked that the press secretary let everyone know when he sends something out. Jim seconded this, and noted that sometimes there are local papers to which we might forward GPVA press releases. Blaizen noted that our press releases are always pushed to our social media, our website, and our list-serves. Kyle Rockett said GPUS used to put out templates for letters to the editor, maybe still are. Regarding social media, we should definitely do that, but we should also remember traditional media such as radio and newspapers.

(2:01:15) Andrew Franke announced that he and others were thinking about starting up the South Fork local again, and asked what process they need to follow. Jim said that the chairs should send a list of people in their area. Ryan said that if Andrew sends he and Tina an email they can walk him through the process. Tina added that the webmaster can help with getting contacts for local folks, and that there is now a section on the GPVA website dedicated to local organizing. Sid noted that affiliation is controlled by Article Six of our bylaws, available on the website, and that affiliation will have to be voted on by the Leadership Council. Tina added that three fully-participating members are needed to vote at state meetings. Steve asked what the geographic area of the new local will be. Andrew said Rockingham, Rockbridge, and Augusta counties. Charlie suggest they might like to expand into Albemarle county since the Charlottesville local seems to be dormant. Ryan said that he is eager to help and that we all look forward to welcoming the South Fork Greens back.

In response to a question from Dianne, Ryan said that our next meeting would likely be in January. Dianne said that she would like more frequent meetings, and Tina responded that we can have informal meetings any time on Zoom. Charlie said that if we are contemplating running a statewide candidate then we should meet sooner to get petitioning started. Sid noted that it is up to the locals to inform the chairs when they think meetings are needed, and for what purposes, so if someone finds a candidate then they need to let the chairs know so that a meeting can be set.

Kirit noted that we can reimburse people's printing costs for sample ballots.

*****END MEETING*****