

August 5, 2023 - DSA Business Meeting

Present: Sandy Burch, Jackie Reimers, Robbie Liben, Tony Davis, Arthur Endsley, Sarah McClain, John Wolverton, Bob Rosen, David Jones, Liam, Brian Myers

Introductions

Roles:

- **Facilitator:** Sandy
- **Time-keeper:** Sarah
- **Progressive stack:** Robbie
- **Note-taker:** Arthur
- *Motion to approve the agenda (Tony, Arthur), approved*
 - Tony: Need to remember our new Native Land Acknowledgement
 - Arthur: We'd like to hear a Tenants Union report from Liam if it's convenient
- *Motion to approve last meeting's minutes (Robbie, Jackie), approved*

Treasurer's Report (Sarah McClain)

- \$1167.12 belong to the Chapter
- We gave \$246 to the Strike Fund, raised from the raffle
- Over \$1,000 in donations to the Convention fund

Strike Ready Campaign Report (Jackie Reimers)

- We did phone banking, tabling at the Farmer's Market, posting flyers...
- Tabling was the most successful, phone banking was less successful
- Turn-out was okay for the Labor Solidary Fundraiser, would have been better if it wasn't summer
- Also may have lost some steam since an agreement was reached prior to the Strike deadline
- Sandy: I think we should be proud of the work of our Chapter did to quantify the level of community support for the Teamsters
- Tony: Would like to compliment Sarah McClain for her efforts tabling at the Farmer's Market; she did an excellent job engaging people
- Arthur: Want to thank Jackie, Rachel, Mark and others who helped with the Fundraiser; the raffle was amazing
- Bob: Tabled once at the Farmer's Market but I thought it worked really well, getting over 40 people to sign Strike Ready cards, get interested in Unions and possibly in DSA
- Dave: Did we recruit any new members through that effort?

- Sarah: Possibly one, a UPS worker
- Jackie: Since December, we've had just one new member join Western MT DSA.

Ecosocialist Working Group (Dave Jones)

- Have not been meeting so far this Summer
- Current campaign is the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (FFNPT)
- John: And we'll be tabling at the Climate Expo in September
- Sandy: Remind me what the timeline is for the FFNPT? And what is the likelihood of that finding support at the City?
 - John: Amber Sherrill, Parks and Conservation Committee is the person we need to talk to about this; it's very likely she will win her election. After this Summer we'll be talking to her about this. Tabling at the Climate Expo would be a good time to pivot; to ask her to bring it up at City Council in October or November.
- Dave: In practical terms, what we had hoped to do is have the City endorse the Treaty and then move on to practical things the City could do... But a lot of that was pre-empted by the State Legislature.
- Arthur: Pre-emption is a challenge... John, Jackie and I met with Gwen Jones, President of the City Council, last month, and we discussed the Treaty. There are perhaps some things the City could do once the Treaty is passed; instead of banning natural gas hookups, which is pre-empted, the City could incentivize developers to not install hookups.

Pro-Housing Missoula (John Wolverton)

- Break-away team from Common Good Missoula, regarding code modernization
- We've gone through a Mission and Values process; moving past the initial stage, but Summer is hard for scheduling; Aiming to meet twice a month.
- Recruitment and goals are what we're focusing on.
- Arthur: Also, Common Good Missoula is meeting at 5:00p on Monday, August 7, at First United Methodist Church. Any Western MT DSA member is encouraged to attend; we're starting the hard work of talking with neighbors along the proposed route and trying to get them on-board with the project.
- John: I'm still involved with table-talk facilitation for Common Good.

Missoula Tenants Union (Liam)

- First Tenants Union in the State of Montana, registered with a state about a year ago
- Main things we're focusing on: Housing Policy Platform, sent as a survey to City candidates; the Platform covers zoning, tenants rights, etc.
- Tenants right to council is another focus, providing Tenants the right to legal council during eviction proceedings; this can reduce eviction rates by 10-15% in most jurisdictions
 - Tabling at First Friday Farmer's Markets, outside Wal-Mart
 - We've started working with MLSA, Law School to get data on evictions and how much the program would cost

- Might cost \$850k to \$1M a year at the County level
- ACLU, AARP have indicated they are interested in this kind of program
- President of the Montana Landlord Association has threatened to sue us, so we must be doing something right
- Combating burnout by breaking out into smaller groups
- Sandy: What is the general consensus around the Landlord-Tenant Act? How will we deal with that? I've been telling everyone I know we need rent control and they're down with it; I think it has majority appeal in Montana.
 - Liam: That's the elephant in the room... We can't even talk about some of these things because they go against the Landlord-Tenant Act. We need to stop electing landlords to the state legislature. The more liberal side of the state legislature isn't even willing to touch the Act because they think it is a lost cause. The state legislature did pass protections for people living in trailer parks, with bipartisan support, but it was vetoed by the Governor, who's also a landlord. To get rid of the Act...that's going to take a lot of work.
 - Liam: Whitefish, Bozeman tenants groups are doing fantastic work and we've been talking to them. Good things are happening across the state.
- John: The two homes across from the library that are getting knocked down... Wasn't it true there were something like 20 people living in those homes?
 - Liam: I don't know the exact number but the City did mis-represent how many people were living there...
 - John: I think the owner was the one that filed a FOIA request for Daniel Carlino's records...
 - Liam: With the Front Street houses, the tenants were evicted; the owner was asked if he was going to the MRA to receive funds and he didn't answer at the time, but the required 6 months later he did go to the MRA.

Editorial Working Group (Robbie)

- Tony wrote an editorial about the climate crisis, published Thursday morning
- Another editorial about cluster munitions sent to Ukraine
- Bob Rosen has been our excellent Newsletter Editor for so long, but he is moving out of state...! So we are looking for another Newsletter Editor, in addition to other members of our Communications Team.

Statewide Working Group (Jackie)

- Not much to report, planning on some kind of ballot initiative in the background
- Talk about jumping on board with the 350.org Montana ballot initiative
 - Dave: They're currently researching how much support they can gather, to see how much public power they can leverage, on the issue of community solar and wind power. A ballot initiative is a big effort if you want to win.
 - Sandy: Is there a way we can figure out what kind of support they need? Are you attending meetings with them regularly?

- Dave: Not regularly, no, just talking to a friend that's involved. And I think we want to be discreet at this time. I'll ask where they are at with this.
- Sandy: People hate NorthWestern, because they screw Montanans over all the time. We can do that kind of ballot initiative, grassroots style, without a lot of funding—I would hate to see a good effort get mired in the fund-raising phase when we have a good chance of getting widespread, grassroots support. We just need to identify something that is going to bring people together.
- Robbie: Even if we think this initiative may not pass, if it's used in the context of organizing/ movement-building, it could be useful anyway. But we'd have to make very clear how it would fit into a movement-building strategy.
- Liam: At first glance, it gets me excited. It does seem much more viable to limit a proposal [on energy sources] to a provider like NorthWestern, rather than restricting all business in Montana.

Labor Working Group (Jackie)

- Another group contacted us about organizing, a manufacturing group in Missoula. They've contacted us twice, so that's encouraging. Mark met with them last week and we're moving ahead.
- We're postponing our August workshop on Labor History, until September
- We have our regular Working Group meeting on Thursday, August 17 at 6:00p; as we talk about confidential campaigns, reach out to Jackie or Mark for the location and Zoom link.

Missoula Ward 1 Organizing

- We endorsed Gwen Nicholson for Ward 1...
- John: Just a note, there is no Primary for districts in which there are only two candidates
- Sandy: We did do some research on compliance...
- Arthur: Sorry I let this get away from me... We've had some questions about the candidate surveys, particularly from Sam Kulla (Ward 3), who is running against Gwen Jones, who indicated she was not interested in being endorsed by Western MT DSA.
 - Sandy: I think the proper thing to do would be to schedule an interview first; let's say our next Steering Committee meeting.
- Sandy: Compliance; as a Chapter, we are not allowed to spend any money on Gwen Nicholson's campaign, but we can invest time. We also have to be careful about Chapter communications...
 - Sarah: We don't need to endorse her, what Gwen needs is people to go knocking on doors... I was afraid it would inhibit us permanently; that anyone who is a member would be constrained.
 - Arthur: We already did endorse her. Anyone interested in campaigning for Gwen can go to GwenForMissoula.com to volunteer their time or make an individual donation.

- Robbie: The endorsement doesn't make a difference, we can't send an e-mail blast out about her campaign events. Are there similar restrictions on our ability to support a ballot initiative?
- Sandy: Compliance is a moving target, but there would be some concerns...
- Arthur: Given that Gwen Nicholson's campaign manager is a Western MT DSA member, would it be appropriate and in compliance to get Max to talk to Steering about what we can do to support Gwen?
 - Sandy: Yes, I've sent an e-mail to Max about what I discovered regarding compliance.

2024 Leadership Cohort

- How to prepare our Chapter for next year... How to identify new Steering Committee members...
- Planning on some kind of leadership training around December or January
- Robbie: What does the training look like?
 - Sandy: Probably in Zoom or in person... We should probably strive for a hybrid meeting.
 - Dave: We should probably put something into the next newsletter... An announcement that we're looking for volunteers for leadership roles.
 - John: I would suggest that the Steering Committee try to streamline their meetings; when people hear about how many meetings are involved, that can be a disincentive.
 - Sandy: Yes, I would suggest that we as a Chapter streamline all our operations. We are trying to recruit members who are actively working, who are younger, who have less time. There are some structural changes we should consider as a Chapter.
- Arthur: We're also going to have to do what we did last year—conversations member-to-member to get people interested in serving as leaders.
- Sandy: Yes, and perhaps meeting people we haven't met before. Should we approve this concept for discussion at the next Steering Committee Meeting?
- *Motion to discuss the 2024 Leadership Cohort at our next Steering Committee Meeting (Arthur, Robbie), approved*

Native Land Acknowledgement

Motion to adjourn (Robbie, Arthur), approved