

Forward is the local chapter newsletter of the New Progressive Party in Dane County, Wisconsin. Progressive Dane is affiliated with the Independent Progressive Politics Network.

Progressive Dane is a democratic, membership-run organization. The following committees and task forces meet at the PD office, 1202 Williamson, in the Social Justice Center, unless otherwise noted.

Steering Committee: coordinates major activities, oversees the progress of other committees, and sets the agenda for the general membership meetings. Meetings are open to all PD members.
 Co-chair: Brenda Konkel, 345-8720
 Co-chair: Lisa Subeck, 271-1004
 Next meeting: Wednesday, March 14, 7:00 p.m.

Elections Committee
 Chair: Michael Jacob, 245-0894
 Next meeting: Thursday, March 15, 6:30 p.m.

Newsletter Consortium
 Contact: Jim Kellerman, 354-7385

Outreach and Fund raising Committee
 Contact: Jessa Lutz, office@prodane.org, 257-4985
 Next meeting: Monday, February 26, 5:30 p.m.

Policy Committee
 Chair: Ron Richardson, 256-7144
 Next meeting: Sunday, March 18

Transportation Task Force
 Contact: Mike Barrett, mikeb@urbanthoreau.com
 Next Meeting: Thursday, March 8, Escape Java Joint, 916 Williamson Street

Land Use Planning
 Contact: Amy Westra, 608-212-7716

Environmental Task Force
 Contact: Satya Conway-Rhodes, 257-4985

Economic Issues Task Force
 Contact: Vicky Selkove, vsselkove@gmail.com, 772-6046
 Next meeting: Tuesday, February 27

Education Task Force
 Contact: Jason Engle, 240-9291

Housing Task Force
 Contact: Brenda Konkel, 345-8720
 Next meeting: Sunday, March 18

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THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS: Brenda Konkel, Jessa Lutz, Rick Richards, Ron Richardson, Amy Westra

Submit articles, meeting times and announcements for the November newsletter to Jessa Lutz, 257-4985, or office@prodane.org by noon, Tuesday, March 13.

Send all correspondence to:
 Progressive Dane

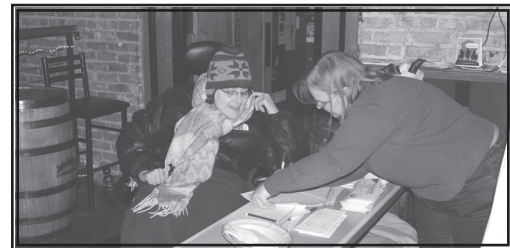
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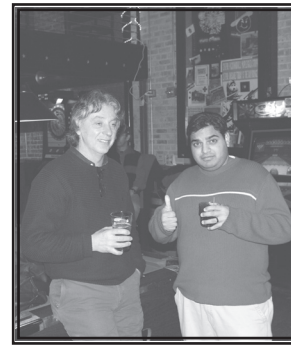
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An Evening at the PD Fundraiser



More Photos of All the Fun at the Elections Fundraiser...



The PD Mayoral Debate

by Brenda Konkel

ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7th AT 6:30 AT THE WARNER PARK Community and Recreation Center, Progressive Dane held a debate with the four mayoral candidates: Ray Allen, Dave Cieslewicz, Peter Munoz, and Will Sandstrom. The debate lasted about half an hour and allowed each candidate to provide the standard opening and closing statements and had a variety of other formats for asking questions.

The candidates were asked several questions and given one minute to answer the question, but they were also subjected to the "speed round" where we asked a series of 'yes' or 'no' and multiple choice questions. Questions were prepared by the policy committee and with questions submitted through our website. At the forum, participants were also allowed to submit questions to be asked. About 50 people attended the forum on a very chilly night. Here are some of the answers to some of our "speed round" questions.

- Increased funding for child care programming? All said "yes".
- Discontinue use of tasers? All said "no".
- Should the City bail out Overture if it continues to have financial problems? All said "no".
- Paid Sick leave? All said "no"; Mayor Dave said he supported Kennedy's bill.
- State Journal or Cap Times? No one answered seriously.
- Starbucks, Ancora or Michaelangelo's? Ray said "Ancora", Dave said "Michaelangelo's" and Munoz said "home".
- Tax caps, budget caps or thinking caps? All said "thinking caps".
- Planes, trains or automobiles? Ray said "planes", Dave said "trains dammit!" and Peter said "bus".
- Which of the 4 candidates they would vote for if they couldn't vote for your self? Ray said "Peter", Peter said "Ray", Dave said "Will", and Will said "Dave".
- Dump the Metro transfer point system? All said "no".
- Public financing of campaigns? All said "yes".
- Limit alcohol licenses downtown? Peter and Ray said "no", Dave said "yes".
- Instant run off voting? All said "no", but Dave changed his answer to "pass".
- Progressive Dane, friend or foe? Peter said he has no foes, Dave said "friend" and I don't recall Ray's answer, but he didn't say foe.
- If your car broke down and you were not able to drive home from work would you: Have someone give you a ride home? Call a cab? Walk, bus or bike? All said "bus" and Peter said he'd walk if he could.
- "Survivor" or "Apprentice"? Ray and Peter said "Survivor". Dave said he didn't know what we were talking about.
- Zipperer or Soglin? Peter and Dave said "Zipperer", Ray said "Soglin".

We appreciate the willingness of the candidates to play along with the format and we hope the forum was helpful for those who attended. Special thanks to Judy Olson who was our moderator and to Rob Bloch for providing the sound equipment.

Last Month at the GMM

by Brenda Konkel

LAST MONTH AT THE GMM WE started out with an "icebreaker" question of "What is the biggest issue facing Progressive Dane this spring?" The most common issue brought up was that of image. PD's image is mostly a misperception perpetrated by the local media with discussion of what we can do to help them see that we are not the evil monsters they want us to be.

We followed this up with an elections report. We endorsed Mike Verveer and Marj Passman. There was also a motion to endorse Lauren Woods, however, she had not been interviewed by the elections committee. The motion was that the elections committee would interview her and if there were no concerns, she would be endorsed. The interview was set up and she was subsequently endorsed.

Arlene Silveira gave a school board update on the heels of the news that they need to cut \$10 million from next year's budget, so it was a bit of a downer. I'm sure many were wondering what was going through Marj Passman's mind as she sat next to Arlene talking about the impact of such cuts.

There was a brief report on the visits by co-chairs Brenda Konkel and Lisa Subeck to our local media editorial boards. The two visited Channel 3, the *Capital Times*, and the *Wisconsin State Journal*. The main message was that this race needs to be about more than just water, taxes, and trolleys; that there is much more going on in this city that needs attention.

Finally, there was a brief discussion on whether the trolleys issue should go to referendum. While everyone remains skeptical about the notion of trolleys and thinks we need to continue to improve Metro and other transportation systems, deciding this issue by referendum prior to seeing the results of the study, seems to be the wrong way to have this discussion.

PD Outreach Calendar for 2007

by Jessa Lutz

THE OUTREACH COMMITTEE IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE OUR plans for 2007!

In addition to the Beer Caucus meeting the first Thursday of every month (next date is March 1st), we're looking forward to the following:

In **March**, we'll have a potluck-style house party.

April will bring showers and a volunteer recognition event after the newly elected officials are sworn in.

May will have our next Progressive Dane Lecture Series Event: Forum for Progressive Voices, as well as the first annual Bus Shuffle. Look for details in coming newsletters!

In addition to the many tabling activities and events that come with summer months, in **June**, we'll hold an off-the-isthmus event to promote PD in the more rural areas of Dane County.

July will be our beloved Garden Party, as well as the annual festivals.

August marks the return of the People v. The State softball game along with Farmer's Market Saturday tabling.

September will be the 2nd annual PD Bike Tour, moved so that more students will be able to participate, and the Willy Street Fair.

October expects another Lecture Series Event.

November is a great month for food, so we'll have a potluck, and **December** will, of course, end us off with the Snowball.

With such an ambitious outreach calendar, we're seeking volunteers to help with any or all of these events. If you'd like to host a potluck, or something on this list particularly interests you, please drop staff a line at jessa@prodane.org and we'll make sure you're contacted to help coordinate an event.

News Analysis: Madison's Budget Process

by Michael Jacob

THIS YEAR'S CITY OF MADISON budget was a vehicle for several significant insights to the Council's current state. With a backdrop of priority setting, pledge making, and positioning for the future, there is a book's worth of short stories to write about the budget. But we've only got so much space, so here are the items of most interest to progressives.

Memo to local government: City residents view this as their budget.

In spite of the difficulties people had navigating the City's budget debate and registration process, the City budget proved to be a very public document with more than one hundred people weighing in on dozens of amendments over an unprecedented three days of debate by the City Council. Initially, the mayor's budget appeared to be giving everyone a little to love, a little to hate. Instead, the mayor's budget proved to be a good draft, but one that needed some serious editing—alder's and the public went to work in earnest.

Given great importance was full funding for Metro, in the wake of dramatic fare increases and promises to avoid dramatic service cuts. These issues mobilized teachers, students, sane transportation policy advocates, bus riders, communities of color, workers, and advocates.

The attack on planning councils, led by Alders Zach Brandon and Larry Palm, mobilized neighborhood activists from across the city, moving the council to reject the 11th-hour sea-change in policy in favor of a future full debate.

The business community showed up to support bus shelters on the square and to oppose a handful of items. The list goes on, and the testimony clearly helped some alder's decide their votes. The public had a good day.

Pledges gave way to actual priority setting; progressive ideals carried the day. Of keen interest to the Madison media was the emergence of a large

group of alder's that pledged fealty to an arbitrary line in the sand for the tax levy (a 4.1% increase, as compared to the final outcome of 4.3%). But when the debate moved beyond the headlines and onto the actual budget, the hard-core Tax Cappers looked a lot like the parade at the end of *Animal House*—a small group of marchers stuck in a deserted alley with Drum Major Brandon squished up against a wall.

Metro was made whole. Sister Cities, Race Study Circles, neighborhood planning councils, an extra neighborhood planner, a child care inspector, a receptionist at the senior center and Sunday hours at the downtown library avoided the axe. Funds were added for snow removal for disabled access to public transportation, the City's Weed and Seed coordinator, planning for Regent Street, and a bus route for LaFollette students.

Taxpayers were protected from a big bump in the levy by new revenue sources from the Transit Utility and developers and targeted cuts to overblown budgets in some agencies.

In every instance progressives voted with a diverse, varying list of centrists and conservatives to win key changes to the budget. Priorities had a good day. Perhaps ironically, Progressive Dane endorsed alder's proved to be the real centrists when it came to balancing progressive ideals and the effect on taxpayers:

- While voting for increased funding for the initiatives noted above, every one of the seven alder's endorsed by Progressive Dane cast votes that would have had a net result on the property tax levy of between \$29,000 and \$124,000 lower than the budget that was presented to the Council.
- To no one's surprise, conservative Alders Brandon, Cindy Thomas, Jed Sanborn and Paul Skidmore were five of the top six budget cutters, mostly due to their votes to let Metro wither. Alders Judy Compton, Paul Van Rooy, and

Santiago Rosas broke ranks to support Metro and other initiatives.

• And what became of the "moderates"? Palm proved to be an outright libertarian voting against just about everything, even more so than the conservatives. Alder Lauren Cnare similarly allowed herself to be shackled by her pre-budget pledge. Alders Noel Radomski and Isadore Knox acknowledged they'd been duped by the supposed appeal of the Almighty Pledge and voted as the independents they said they would be.

Finally, the Mayor broke from his hard stance and embraced a budget that was built from the ideas he began while incorporating modest, but important changes that position Madison well for the future. Representative government had a good day.

For a complete list of votes on each amendment and the cumulative effect of each alder's votes, see www.prodane.org.

Attention Progressive Dane Techies!

HAVE YOU EVER WANTED TO work on the Progressive Dane web site www.prodane.org? Have you ever wanted to learn more about the technologies that drive the web?

PD has an opening for web master starting in August 2006. We are looking for volunteers who want to manage web site content, administer PD listserves, and oversee PD's online membership/donation program. Please email office@prodane.org if you are interested. PD will train motivated individuals if they don't have programming experience.

Skills needed: HTML, CSS, Javascript. Familiarity with Unix, Mailman, MySQL and Movable Type a plus.

Budget Process Reveals Participation Concerns

by Satya Rhodes-Conway

(with Lisa Subeck and Brenda Konkell)

JULIE SPEARS THOUGHT SHE WAS doing the right thing. She showed up at the City-County building on the first night of the budget debate, filled out her registration form indicating which amendments she supported and which she opposed, and sat for a while to listen to the testimony of her fellow Madisonians. She chose not to speak, assuming that her views would be communicated to the Council when the non-speaking registrants were announced. They never were, and it turns out that her registration was meaningless.

Julie's experience is representative of the city budget process this year. Despite the mayor's public budget workshops, which were ostensibly designed to solicit input, it is remarkably hard for the average citizen to participate in the actual budget process. Do you know how to get a copy of the mayor's proposed budget or the amendments proposed by alder's? You can find the mayor's budget, but only after clicking through multiple city web pages. The alder's amendments are only available if you use the search function.

Suppose you wanted to get involved early on in the process. You could go to the mayor's budget hearing and see a general presentation about why we have to cut the budget, but you wouldn't get any specific information about what might be cut. You could also go to the one of the mayor's budget workshops where participants did a "build your own budget" exercise, which was very interesting and resulted in some very creative thinking from the people who attended.

Unfortunately, none of the mayor's staff was taking notes so none of those ideas went anywhere. You could also go to the Board of Estimates meetings where the budget was discussed, but you would have to choose between those meetings and at least five other city meetings, not to mention whatever else you have going on in your life.

On the night of the actual budget meeting, there was quite a bit of confusion. City staff had posted a short list of "items of interest" with their amendment numbers outside of the council chambers, but it wasn't until you went inside that you could pick up the actual text of the amendments. There were registration forms available. The official word on how to fill them out was to list all the amendments you cared about, indicate if you supported or opposed them, and indicate if you wanted to talk. Missing from the scene were city staff available to answer questions or assist residents with the registration process.

Conversation in the hallway included questions about whether amendments supported and opposed should be listed on the same form; whether those wishing to speak could speak on only one item at a time or all amendments together; if one could speak on some amendments listed on the registration form and list support or opposition for others without including them when speaking; questioning whether the five minute limit was for capital and operating budgets together or five minutes was given for each; general discussion of how to best complete the forms so they make sense; and much frustration over the lack of assistance in understanding and completing the registration process.

Some were still confused when they had their time to speak. At least two speakers returned to their seats thinking that they would have another opportunity to speak on additional amendments. As the evening wore on (the last public testimony ended at 10:45 pm), it was clear that many people who had wanted to speak had to leave thus forfeiting their chance to have their voices heard. A large crowd turned out for the meeting, many of whom do not ordinarily attend. This sort of civic involvement should be encouraged with a friendly welcome and some assistance with the process, rather than stifled by confusion and frustration.

The budget is probably the single most important thing the City Council deals with in any given year. It's critical that the people of Madison have access to the budget process and that their voices be heard. This year's budget process leads me to suggest several needed reforms to the process:

- Make budget information clearly available at the top of the front page of the city website.
- Any time citizens are asked for input, make sure that input is recorded and communicated to the Mayor and the Council.
- Don't schedule budget related meetings at the same time as other city meetings.
- Have copies of agendas and amendment lists on the tables *outside* the council chamber where people actually need them.
- Have city staff available to help with the registration process.
- Solve the "I can't stay here until midnight" problem—let people defer their speaking to the next night and/or have a time stamp on registration forms so the people who register first speak first.
- Announce and/or post the number of registrants on an issue—let people know that registration means something even if they don't speak.
- Count registrations on each amendment, for and against broken down by district if possible.

The reforms won't solve all our budget related problems, but they would go a long way towards making the process accessible to the average Madisonian. Remember, the Mayor and the Council work for us.