

# the Darke T.E.A. Patriots

*... because we care!*

## MEETING REPORT

JUNE 8, 2010

The meeting started with a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance to our Flag. A rendition of the second verse of our National Anthem by a retired Marine (received late Monday) was especially appreciated by all present.

A continuation of the discussion centered on organization finances started with recognition of the three options available -- 1. Dues, 2. Donations and 3. Fund Raisers. The Executive Committee has reviewed expenses to date and determined a forecast of expenses in excess of \$500.00 per month for the next three months. Ballots were distributed to allow attendees to vote for their choice or to make suggestions. This issue will be finalized at the next meeting.

The need for volunteers to man the both this weekend in Versailles was stressed.

Jerry Gasquez asked for and received an opportunity to speak. After reviewing how this organization got started and the steps taken to grow to this point, Jerry emphasized the need for all interested individuals to work with the "core group", to bridge the gap between us and you so that we could become "WE THE PEOPLE". Only by working together can we achieve the goals identified in our Mission Statement.

Jesse Leonard addressed on an individual personal basis specific items in the United States Constitution. Jesse's knowledge level was demonstrated again to the actively participating audience. One question regarding the term Democracy was correctly answered by Jesse because it does not appear in the Constitution. Jesse is scheduled to return and continue with another session. His parting reminder was to read the Constitution.

Cindy Pike and Jim Surber had been invited to address exactly the same subject "Socialism and the United States". No restrictions or suggestions accompanied the request to speak.

Cindy began her presentation with a disclaimer that the following items were her opinion and not that of her elected office, County Clerk or her position as the Darke County Republican Party Executive Committee Chairperson. Her presentation focused on individual action and acceptance of responsibility while using many personal examples to show that what her parents taught her were valid character factors in her life. The impression made by her speech was that her understanding of socialism was best presented on a personal basis.

Jim Surber, Darke County Engineer and Democratic Party Executive Committee Chairman, surprised the audience and did receive a sincere chuckle when his first statement was, "I agree with virtually everything that Cindy just said." Jim went on to review facets of socialism that per Jim are and have been a part of America since 1776. Examples given were firemen, policemen, garbage men, roads built by public versus private entities, etc. Exchange of ideas and concepts regarding individuals receiving funds (such as social security, food stamps, health care, housing assistance, and others) from the government contributed to a fairly heated session when the observation that when over 50% of the population depends on this government income, the amount will continue or increase.

The Darke County Commissioners Committee Report is very informative but because of time constraint was not presented at the meeting. The information is below this report.

The meetings for the next three months will be every other week. The next meeting will be held on June 22, 2010.

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County Commissioners

June 8, 2010

### **Items of interest**

Commissioners recently approved putting out bids on the demolition of all buildings behind the courthouse except the Law Library. They anticipate starting the gravel parking lot this summer and wrapping it up by fall. Because some of the funding will come from a state grant, it has to be gravel for a minimum of six months. Commissioners say there won't be a problem with city ordinance because it will only be temporary, that the job will be finished the following summer.

Grant will be a little over \$200,000. The balance of the cost, which could be as much as \$100,000, will come from Capital Improvement.

The county CAD system has been down for several weeks. It's outdated and can't be repaired. Replacement will run about \$310,000. While the commissioners say that emergency services have not been – and will not be – impacted, paperwork is getting bogged down and some lost service enhancements have been challenging.

Commissioners are seeking grants to at least partially fund the replacement, but so far little luck. Once all options have been followed, a portion or all of the replacement will come from Capital Improvement.

The Capital Improvement fund currently stands at about \$800,000. These two projects alone could deplete half of it. Funds have already been designated for bathroom improvements in the basement of the courthouse. Nothing has been said about the funding sources to finish the parking lot next summer.

What I haven't had a chance to find out is if any money from either this budget or next year's has been earmarked for Capital Improvement.

Commissioner Delaplane reported at a different meeting Thursday morning that they are working on next year's budget and they anticipate that funding will probably be flatlined next year for the various agencies. She also noted that auto sales were up slightly, which will be good for the county's sales tax revenues.

### **Communication**

One of the things that anyone who has sat through a public meeting has noticed is that all we hear is action that has often already been discussed and resolved ahead of time. If it was new to the commissioners, it was usually something basic like an expense request or a routine action or series of actions required to move money from one line item to another. I've been attending meetings for years, twice a week for more than a year, and have yet to see a vote that wasn't unanimous.

I asked about that once and was told that they often disagreed... I have yet to see it. If they did so, it was at a meeting other than the publicly advertised ones.

Three people can't possibly agree on every single issue. Discussion occurs, sometimes maybe even heated discussion. Ohio's Sunshine Law says these should be public discussions, yet we are not aware of them.

As I understand it, all public meetings are supposedly posted on a bulletin board in a hallway in the back of the building, but I haven't verified the accuracy of that statement. And, at least in my opinion, it's irrelevant. It simply isn't sufficient.

At a recent meeting, we talked about occasional evening meetings so that those who worked or had other business during the day could attend. The commissioners noted that it would entail extra expense because of the employees that would be required to be present. I don't agree... there are options like an occasional split shifts or staggered hours. Businesses do it; so can our public employees.

However, that's only a partial solution. Mike Stegall, the Republican candidate for commissioner, said he would be writing columns – probably monthly – and would be discussing commissioner activities on Community Ties and other venues. This is a start, but it still doesn't allow for questions or open dialog. Regular updates on the web site were discussed at one meeting, but it hasn't happened yet.

There has to be a way of convincing our commissioners that they need to be more open. Frankly, I can't do it alone. David Self can't do it alone. The only way it is going to happen is if a significant number of people indicate they want to know what's going on. That's us. All of us.

With only a few exceptions that I can remember over the years, I don't believe there is any attempt to hide information, except of course what is discussed in executive session. I just don't believe there is an urgency to explore better methods of communication because they don't think the voters care.

We need to find out what the various candidates feel about communication. I was the only one who made it an issue. Stegall recently wrote that he thought the commissioners were doing a good job of communicating, probably for the reason noted above. I don't agree, but if there is no interest from the public, then he – and they – may be right.