



FROM THE MANATEE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

March 2024

David Hogg To Speak at Dems' Unity and Action Dinner

By Wil Clapper

David Hogg will bring his message of hope for the future of our country and the need to elect a new generation of voters to national, state and local offices to the **Unity and Action Dinner**, Manatee County Democratic Party's premier fundraising event, Saturday, March 23, 6 p.m., at the Bradenton Area Convention Center in Palmetto.



Hogg, 23, is a gun control activist, who as a high school senior survived the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High shooting in 2018 in Parkland FL. He is a co-founder of the March for Our Lives movement and continues to advocate for gun control reform.

At the Unity and Action Dinner, which is the Manatee Dems' annual gala, you can expect exclusive, multicultural entertainment, signature cocktails, a meal served at your table, live and silent auctions and a return of the Blue State Wine Wall

The gala auction team needs your help to obtain specific silent and live auction items. If you would like to donate to the auctions, contact Robin Sathan, MCDPGala@gmail.com.

Grab your ticket today! There is special pricing for students and tables of eight.

**Get Your
Ticket!**

Environmental Caucus Urges Emerson Point Purchase by County

By Wil Clapper

The **Manatee Democratic Environmental Caucus** is urging all residents of Manatee County to contact the members of the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and insist that the Emerson Point Expansion purchase go forward.

The BOCC is expected to put the Emerson Point Expansion purchase on its March 12 agenda. You can contact individual BOCC members by calling 941-745-3700 or visiting the county website for email addresses [here](#).



Fishing Pier at Emerson Point Preserve

A 97-acre parcel on Terra Ceia Bay's southern edge is adjacent to Emerson Point Preserve, which is on the extreme west portion of Sned Island. The land was purchased by the state in the 1990s and leased to Manatee County. It is designated by the state as an Outstanding Florida Waters area.

“It is time for the BOCC to put the purchase of the Emerson Point Expansion on the agenda and to approve it,” said Ruth Lawler of the Democratic Environmental Caucus in an email announcement. “Don’t let this unique opportunity slip through your fingers.”

Manatee County’s Environmental Lands Management and Acquisition Committee (ELMAC) recommended purchase of the Emerson Point extension to the county commissioners in April of 2023. BOCC voted unanimously to move forward on the purchase in the same month. In December, the BOCC received an update on the status of Emerson Point.

At a recent BOCC meeting there were multiple citizen comments supporting the Emerson Point Expansion purchase.

Former County Commissioner and current publisher of *The Bradenton Times*, Joseph McClash, implored the BOCC to bring the matter to a vote because it has been a year since the commissioners’ vote to approve. He also said the land will go to a developer if the county doesn’t purchase it.

Executive Director of Suncoast Waterkeepers, Abbey Tyrna, asked the Board to put the Emerson Point expansion on the agenda and then to approve it.

Commissioner George Kruse stated that the April 2023 vote on Emerson Point was not to approve the purchase but to explore the acquisition. He further said county staff is negotiating the purchase price.

Commissioner Kevin Van Ostenbridge agreed with Kruse on the matter and said the challenge now is “the exorbitant price” set by the sellers. So far there has not been a funding commitment by the state, according to Van Ostenbridge.

Kruse expressed concern that the Board would “kick this down the road” as it has in the past. He made a motion to direct staff to come up with a last, best offer and add

this topic to the agenda for the next meeting (March 12). The motion passed 5-2.

[Contact Your Commissioner Here](#)

Are You Ready To Be A Delegate At The National Convention?

Be part of history! Run for district delegate to the 2024 Democratic National Convention in Chicago from August 19 to 22. All registered Democrats may file. The filing deadline is noon on March 25.

Florida's 16th Congressional District – which includes all of Manatee and part of Hillsborough Counties - will be represented at the convention by two men and three women formally elected by Democrats in the district.

To learn more about filing to be a delegate and the delegation process, visit the [Florida Democratic Party National Convention webpage](#)

Election of the 16th Congressional District delegates will take place at these locations:

- The Lakewood Ranch Library, 16410 Rangeland Parkway, Lakewood Ranch
- The Manatee County Democratic Party Office, 435 Cortez Road West, Bradenton.

Early voting is Thursday, April 18, 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Delegate election day is Saturday, April 20, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

[Learn More](#)

Caucus Addresses Environmental Concerns

By David Krasnoff

Amongst the myriad of issues facing residents of Manatee County, none is more universal than the environmental challenges that affect our drinking water, our traffic patterns and our density.



Florida is the fourth largest economy of the 50 states that compose our nation. Concerns regarding our environment influence our daily lives and have impact on local economies. Environmental issues affect those that live here, those that wish to vacation here and those that make their living here.

The **Manatee Democratic Environmental Caucus** is leading the way in identifying local environmental issues with the goal of protecting the quality of our drinking water, protecting lands that provide shelter against flooding and providing recreational opportunities to our citizens and our visitors.

Get involved. Allow your concerns as a registered voter in Manatee County to help lead the way in defining paths to protect our drinking water.

Help in exploring science-based environmental evidence that will aid to help stop rubber stamp developments that marginalize watersheds and disrupt run-offs.

The Environmental Caucus will have its monthly Zoom meeting on Thursday, March 14, 7 p.m. Featured speaker is Rob Brown, former head of the county's natural resources department. For more information and the Zoom link, contact eco.manateedems@gmail.com.

Let's work together to provide an alternative to politicized policies that jeopardize our quality of life. Join the Manatee Democratic Environmental Caucus by contacting eco.manateedems@gmail.com.

Read On Manatee! Opposes Library Book Removals

By Diana Hines

ReadOnManatee! has emerged as a powerful voice opposing actions on the part of a few citizens, politicians and school board members to remove what they deem are objectionable books from school libraries.

To date, at least 74 books have been removed from Manatee school libraries for content that refers to race history or LGBTQ identity.

The latest addition to the removed books list includes the New York Times bestseller, *The Freedom Writers Diary*.

In her February 27 address to the Manatee School Board, Marie Masferrer, who leads ReadOnManatee!, explained: "This is a powerful collection of journal entries from high school students who overcame adversity through the transformative power of education. Their inspiring stories demonstrate the importance of empathy and the potential for positive change."

Even though Masferrer was refuting a request for removal made by one citizen, the application for removal now gets consideration by the school board.

Chantal Wilford, who ran unsuccessfully in the last school board election for the second district, said that she had learned "the objection to [*Freedom Writers*] was that the book promotes gang violence and drugs as a couple of the student authors were experiencing this in their home life and wrote about it."

Masferrer maintains that these books actually reflect the problems that modern students face and so deserve to be the subject of reading and discussion in school and public arenas.

ReadOnManatee! continues its fight to educate school board members about books, ideas and the law. To learn more about the fight to save access to books and ideas, visit the:

Black History Gala a Success

More than 100 Democrats and supporters came together in a spirit of unity to celebrate the diverse Black culture during the **Manatee County Democratic Black Caucus Black History Gala**, Feb. 22 at Oscura in Bradenton.



“The Black History Gala was a resounding success,” said Manatee County Democratic Party Vice Chair Glenn Pearson. “Proceeds benefit voter education and outreach efforts of the Black Caucus that help Manatee Democrats register voters and motivate them to actually vote.”

Citizen-Scientists Step Up for Manatee's Environment

By Diana Hines

Manatee has seen its county government cave to the will of developers who convince county commissioners to gut wetlands protections. [The corruption of our BOCC](#) will exact a price on the health of the water, plant and animal life in Manatee.

In this current climate, citizen-scientist projects are emerging in Manatee, signaling what Ruth Lawler, [of the Manatee Democratic Environmental Caucus](#), deems is a ripe moment to step up for the environment.

Lawler, an iconic figure in Manatee’s environmental movement, regularly attends BOCC meetings, attempting to educate commissioners on the value of wetland protections. She hosts speakers addressing a range of citizen-scientist projects including restoring oyster populations, monitoring fisheries and reviving neighborhood ponds.

Working alongside Lawler is [Suncoast Waterkeeper](#) Executive Director Dr. Abbey Tyrna, who provides scientific data documenting the health of Manatee area waterways. Dr. Tyrna has recruited groups of citizen-scientists as Mangrove Rangers. The Rangers patrol vulnerable stands of mangroves using drones to capture aerial photographs of the health of these shoreline groves. Working in teams, one member operates a boat, another a drone, while two others spot and record the team's findings.



Suncoast Waterkeeper teams monitoring mangroves.

The data these teams yield will be useful to Suncoast Waterkeeper in providing visual evidence and data of the decline of the mangroves' health. The organization has been at the forefront of the public fight to provide factual evidence to the BOCC in their deliberations over re-writing sections of the county's Comprehensive Plan to favor shrinking wetland buffers.

Another citizen-scientist effort that uses the aerial perspective of drones detects threats to manatees. This project is led by Mote Aquarium's Dr. Beth Brady, who directs volunteer drone operators to count the number of manatees in a specific area. The pictures the drones collect also reveal the physical condition of the manatees - body mass and scars that indicate boat trauma. These photos help Dr. Brady identify which animals need rescue.

Nicholas Azzara, spokesman for [Keep Manatee Beautiful](#), says that the group must rely on a variety of ways of reaching out to potential volunteers, utilizing media sources, newsletters and social media. The key, according to Azzara, is to be repetitive about the group's message and the purpose of its events.

Under the directorship of Jennifer Hoffman, Keep Manatee Beautiful has been successful in bringing together volunteers, businesses and local governments to provide solutions to littering, illegal dumping, solid waste disposal, recycling and maintaining the beauty of Manatee County.

Such projects, fueled by the energy and passion of both new and experienced volunteers, are the eyes and ears of Manatee's environmental health. Volunteers have emerged despite the indifference of county government toward environmental protections. To join this community of engaged volunteers, follow any of the links in the article above and step up for the environment!

Be Part of the Solution; Join an Advisory Board

By Vicki Waters

Democrats can affect change in Manatee County government, schools and services

by volunteering for openings on boards. Residents who volunteer for these boards bring knowledge, expertise, a fresh point of view and help balance representation.

To learn more about each of the county's boards and qualifications for applicants, call 941-745-3700 or email advisoryboards@mymanatee.org or go to www.mymanatee.org/government/advisory_boards.

The City of Bradenton has vacancies on the following volunteer boards:

- **Affordable Housing Advisory Committee:** Currently two vacancies. For information contact Debbie Ash at 941 748-4501, ext. 3478, or email Debbie Ash at deborah.ash@mymanatee.org
- **Architectural Review Board:** Currently one vacancy. Email the Planning & Community Development Department at planning@cityofbradenton.com or call 941-932-9414.
- **Nuisance Abatement Board:** Currently one vacancy. For information contact Volker Reiss at Planning & Community Development at volker.reiss@cityofbradenton.com.
- **Planning Commission:** Currently one vacancy. For information email the Planning & Community Development Department at planning@cityofbradenton.com or call 941-932-9414.
- **Tree & Land Preservation Board:** Currently six vacancies. For information email the Planning & Community Development Department at planning@cityofbradenton.com or call 941-932-9414.

The City of Bradenton Beach has a Ward 1 commission vacancy. The deadline for applications is March 13, at 2 p.m. Submit applications to City Clerk Terri Sanclemente at tsanclemente@cityofbradentonbeach.com.

There are vacancies on two Manatee School Board committees.

- The Audit Committee has two positions that expire June 30. To be considered, you must live in Manatee County and be an active or retired CPA or had employment experience in school district financial operations. If interested, submit a letter expressing your interest and providing contact information and a brief work summary to the Manatee School District, Attn: Board Agency Clerk, PO Box 9069, Bradenton, FL 34206-9069.
- The Citizens Financial Oversight Committee has one vacancy. If interested, email the School Board Agency Administrative Associate at cox3l@manateeschools.net.

More Than 100 Attend District 3 Gathering



Tim and Kate Eiseler, Manatee County Democratic Party activists, address more than 100 people gathered at the Manatee County Public Library in downtown Bradenton Feb. 24 to hear what the Democratic Party is doing to change local government.

District 3 county commissioner candidate Diana Shoemaker, school board candidate Heather Felton and Holmes Beach Mayor Judy Titsworth spoke to the crowd as did Democratic Party Chair Chris Wetherington. Voter registration and Vote-By-Mail efforts proved popular. Tim Eiseler indicated the meeting was successful and he plans to replicate it in other districts in the coming months.



The Manatee County Democratic Party is a **100% volunteer organization**. All contributions of any size are appreciated.

Get involved! Check out the many area Democratic clubs and caucuses. Meet like-minded people at fun events!


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Resource Links

Florida Democratic Party

The Florida Channel

National Democratic
Party

Manatee County Board of
Commissioners

Headquarters Office

435 Cortez Road W, Bradenton, Florida
34207, United States
(941) 301-4336
info@manateecountydemocrats.com



Hours

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays,
Noon to 4 p.m.
Saturdays 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Contact us to schedule a meeting

Visit our
Website

Manatee County Democratic Party | 435 Cortez Road W, Bradenton, FL 34207

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