



## FROM THE MANATEE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

October 2023

### Manatee Dems Urged to Attend Convention

*By Wil Clapper*

The Manatee County Democratic Party is urging Manatee Dems to become engaged and attend the 2023 Take Back Florida State Convention. The convention is scheduled October 27 to 29 at the Rosen Centre in Orlando and is an opportunity to prepare and mobilize Florida Democrats for the 2024 elections.



“It’s important for Manatee Dems to get involved by becoming a delegate to the convention to learn how they can help push the Take Back Florida agenda for 2024,” said State Committeewoman Florence Shelton-Clark.

The convention will feature training sessions, meetings, receptions, a general session and a fundraising dinner. Any Democrat can register to be a delegate.

“During the State Convention, we will launch our organizing initiatives and provide training for party leaders in preparation for the 2024 elections,” said Nikki Fried, chair of the Florida Democratic Party.

“This 2024 election is crucial to the survival of our democracy, our freedoms, civil liberties and Democratic causes in Manatee,” said Shelton-Clark. “Residents must get involved, educate themselves about what’s going on, recruit other volunteers and vote.”

Anyone attending the convention must register to become a delegate. Registration will close Oct. 6. There is a registration fee of \$60 (\$35 for students).

[Sign Up Here](#)

# Spice up Democracy With Salsa Night



**By Wil Clapper**

Get ready to move your hips and groove to the rhythm of salsa during the Manatee Democratic Party's Salsa Night at the Oscura Cafe and Bar, Friday, Oct. 13. Oscura is located at 816 Manatee Avenue E, Bradenton.

Join us for a sizzling night of dancing, music and fun as we celebrate the spicy flavors of democracy while enjoying the vibrant beats of salsa music. Whether you're a seasoned dancer or a beginner, everyone is welcome.

"The way we become stronger is by creating community and understanding with each other," said Manatee County Democratic Party Chair Evelyn Almodóvar. "We can do this by having fun. As a dancer for many years, I know how dance can bring us together. Especially in the Hispanic/Latinx community."

Patricia DeVilliers, president of the Hispanic Democratic Caucus of Manatee and co-organizer of the salsa party said, "The funds raised will be used to help our Latino community register to vote. If we work together as a community and increase our votes, our state and federal legislators will hear our voices. Education, medical services, immigration, infrastructure, economy are all affected by our vote".

Salsa lessons are given at 6 p.m., while music and dancing starts at 7 p.m. The salsa class, dance party and a cocktail are included with your ticket. A silent auction to benefit civic engagement among the Hispanic and Latinx community will occur all evening. Voter registration and Vote-By-Mail enrollment opportunities will be available.

[Get Your Tickets Here!](#)

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## Being Sensitive With Appropriate Terms During Hispanic Heritage Month

*In celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, we offer clarification on how to refer to our Spanish-speaking neighbors.*

**By Patricia DeVilliers**

My name is Patricia DeVilliers. I am president of the Hispanic Democratic Caucus of Manatee County. I am a Hispanic Latina living in Palmetto. Please do not call me Mexican or Chicana or Latinx.

Knowing how to refer to Spanish-speaking residents can be confusing. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary there are subtleties involved in what Spanish-

heritage people consider correct.

**Hispanic:** Of, relating to or being a person of Latin American descent and especially of Cuban, Mexican or Puerto Rican origin living in the U.S. Of or relating to the people, speech or culture of Spain.

**Latino:** A native or inhabitant of Latin America. A person of Latin American origin living in the U.S.

**Latina:** a woman or girl who is a native or inhabitant of Latin America. A woman or girl of Latin American origin living in the U.S.

**Latinx:** Of, relating to, or marked by Latin American heritage. Used as a gender-neutral alternative to Latina or Latino.

**Chicano:** An American and especially a man or boy of Mexican descent.

**Mexican:** a native or inhabitant of Mexico. A person of Mexican descent.

Latin America consists of the entire continent of South America, Central America and the islands of the Caribbean whose residents speak a Romance language. Therefore, people from Jamaica, Bahamas, Curaçao and Dominica are Caribbean but not Latino. A person from Spain would be Hispanic but not Latino.

My friend from Brazil, Luz, is Latina but not Hispanic because Brazilians speak Portuguese, not Spanish. Her husband is Hispanic, Latino and Mexican. Their children are Latino, Chicanos and may be Hispanic if they learned to speak Spanish at home.

I was born in Colombia (the country of great coffee and emeralds) and, as I stated earlier, I am a Hispanic Latina but I am not Mexican, Chicana or Latinx. My preference is to use the term Latino/Latina/Latinx because it is customary not to use both Hispanic and Latino adjectives together.

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## New Logo Boosts Manatee Dems' Profile



The Manatee Democratic Party has a new logo to accompany a growing sense of empowerment among its hundreds of volunteers. "This is the time to step up and take back Manatee County," said Manatee County Democratic Party Chair Evelyn Almodóvar. "Our new logo and branding suite leads us into a new era as we work together to turn Manatee blue." Variations of the forward reaching logo will appear on all MCDP materials.

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## Voter Registration Rally Mobilizes Dems,

# Introduces Key Democratic Challenger

**By Diana Hines**

The Democratic spirit in Manatee was alive and well at G.T. Bray Park, Bradenton, Saturday, Sept. 23rd. Officially kick-starting the 2024 election season, the rally focused on mobilizing volunteers and announcing Democratic challengers for key positions in District 3.

The music and energy of the event were palpable as Evelyn Almodóvar, chair of Manatee County Democratic Party, called the turnout “amazing.” Forty-five people had registered, but 80 attendees were there at the beginning and more steadily streamed in as the event progressed.

The highlight of the event was the announcement of Democratic challenger to Kevin Van Ostenbridge’s District 3 seat on the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). Diana Shoemaker, former CEO of Habitat for Humanity, addressed the cheering crowd and set down the central values of her campaign.



*Evelyn Almodóvar, Diana Shoemaker,  
& Glenn Pearson*

Shoemaker and her family have lived in District 3 for 24 years and are deeply invested in Manatee County. But, as she told rally attendees, “The BOCC has lost touch with local residents by catering to a few special interests.”

She is running to restore integrity to the Board through open dialogue and attention to critical local issues necessary for creating fair and balanced policy. Among these issues are wetlands protections, opposing the Holmes Beach parking garage and addressing traffic and pedestrian safety stemming from the Board’s long history of approving housing without necessary infrastructure to ensure safe travel throughout the community.



Distributed at the rally were materials informing attendees about the Clean Water Initiative that will go to ballot in 2024. Ruth Lawler, chair of the Manatee Democratic Environmental Caucus, guided those who lined up to sign the petition. Voter registration forms were also available for volunteers, along with information on how to get out the vote.

Three additional rallies the next two months are in planning stages. The Manatee Democrats will keep you informed of dates and where the rallies will be.

**For more information on Diana Shoemaker:**

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## The BOCC Ignores Science With Vote to Gut Wetlands Protections

*By Diana Hines*

Since the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) proposed amendments to the comprehensive plan months ago, it has ignored efforts by the public, by scientists and conservationists to educate them on the value of buffer zones that line the perimeter of our wetlands. Among the many benefits, buffer zones protect wetland water quality by filtering pollutants, mitigating floods, controlling erosion and providing habitat for fish and wildlife.

However, on August 17, the board voted 6-1 to transmit comprehensive plan amendments to the state of Florida, changes that would decrease wetland buffer zones from Manatee's current minimum of 50 feet to the state's bare minimum of 15 feet. The board's constant refrain during that meeting was "there is no science" to support protections in the existing comp plan.

This disinformation was echoed by their hired consultant Daniel DeLisi, who gave no scientific reason for his recommended reductions, even as Commissioner George Kruse—the lone dissenter on the board—gave him a sound grilling on the logic of his presentation.

In response to the board's ignorance, the science community in Manatee and neighboring counties has stepped forward to present the information that the board apparently lacks. Two recent events attracted hundreds of Manatee residents to learn about the value of the wetlands. Strangely absent was the BOCC itself, except for Commissioner Kruse who made the effort to attend.

One such event on September 14 was hosted by the Manatee Democratic Environmental Caucus. It featured Rusty Chinnis, Chair of the Board of Suncoast Waterkeeper, a public health and environmental organization. Chinnis writes local articles and speaks to various citizen groups about the ecology of the Tampa Bay area.

He carefully documented with graphic photos and data the signs of water degradation he has observed: warmer waters with nitrogen runoff, 15 times the amount of red tide, harmful bacteria and starving manatees. These are signs that Tampa Bay, as he put it, "is on the verge of collapse."

His central message is a call to action for all Manatee residents: "We have to push back on the BOCC vote. Tell the commissioners that 'they may have won the battle this time, but they will lose the war... This is NOT a partisan issue.'" President of the Democratic Environmental Caucus Ruth Lawler added, "We must keep up the messages and comments to our local BOCC, as it is too important that we not give up."

A second event hosted by Suncoast Waterkeeper took place on September 26. Dr. Abbey Tyrna, who has emerged as one of the most prominent scientists behind the



effort to inform the BOCC and the public about the value of the wetlands, monitored a panel discussion about what is at stake in the proposed changes to the comp plan.

Panelists included Ed Sherwood, executive director of Tampa Bay Estuary Project; A.J. Reisinger, assistant professor in the Soil and Water Sciences Department at University of Florida; and Jim Bays, environmental scientist with Stewards of Our Urban Lakes. The panel presented an extraordinary range of scientific data to prove how wetland buffers have been destroyed by phosphate mining, nitrogen runoff and algae blooms that have wiped out much seagrass habitat—the main food source of manatees.

The long-term costs of replacing stormwater ponds to offset the destruction of buffer zones are enormous, asserted Bays. If so, this is a practical consideration that the BOCC conveniently ignores in its short-term vision.

The attempt to reduce wetland buffers is not a completely “done deal,” though. On Thursday, Oct. 5, the BOCC will convene for a land use meeting regarding the comprehensive plan amendments. This is an all-hands-on-deck call to address the board, reading scientific information into the record. To volunteer for a spot, contact Dr. Tyrna at [executivedirector@suncoastwaterkeeper.org](mailto:executivedirector@suncoastwaterkeeper.org). She will give you specific information you may use for a three-minute address to the board.

We can all help protect our precious wetlands by becoming involved in organizations that combat the disinformation of the BOCC with scientific fact:

[Manatee Democratic Environmental Caucus](#)

[Suncoast Waterkeeper](#)

[ManaSota-88](#)

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## Virtual Phone Bank Team Reaches Out to Voters

**By Laurie Cusick**

The Manatee Democrats' Virtual Phone Bank Team kicked off a voter outreach day to commemorate September 11 as a national day of service and remembrance.

Volunteers came to Manatee Democratic headquarters to receive phone bank training and to call registered Democrats, reminding them about the new regulations regarding the Vote-By-Mail (VBM) program.



Phone bank organizers Barb Stubbers and Laurie Cusick called the day a huge success and a boost for the Virtual Phone Bank team.

"This is something we can be doing now to work towards the goal of saving democracy," said Stubbers. "People who sign up for VBM do actually vote in higher percentages than people that are just registered."

The opportunity to mail in ballots is an important component of Democratic voter turnout. Due to a change in Florida law, all VBM enrollments were discontinued after the November 2022 election. As a result, Manatee Democratic VBM enrollments were slashed from about 40,000 in 2022 to a current number of less than 5,000.

Manatee residents must re-enroll in VBM to receive mailed ballots for the 2024 election cycle.

The Manatee County Democratic Party anticipates that additional wide-spread initiatives will be needed to get VBM enrollments back to 2022 levels or higher. The Manatee Dems' Virtual Phone Bank provides a needed public service message about VBM and is an important part of the Democratic strategy to boost the number of people receiving their ballots by mail.

If you would like to volunteer with the Manatee Dems' Virtual Phone Bank, or are interested in learning about other volunteer opportunities:

[Sign Up Here](#)

If you would like to enroll in Vote-By-Mail or check your voting status, learn more at [ManateeCountyDemocrats.com/vote](https://ManateeCountyDemocrats.com/vote).

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## Columnist Wows Crowd at Democratic Club Luncheon

**By Sue Brite**

Carrie Seidman, award winning columnist at the Sarasota Herald-Tribune, did not disappoint her audience when she addressed the September meeting of the Manatee Democratic Club at Peridia Golf and Country Club.

Nearly 60 people enjoyed lunch and then Seidman's speech about her work as a newspaperwoman and community activist. Afterwards, she mingled and answered attendees' questions.



A graduate of Columbia School of Journalism, Seidman said, "I'm an old liberal dinosaur, but I try not to bring politics into my column unless it affects my readers' quality of life. And since 2016, it's been especially hard to stay neutral." Applause promptly greeted that remark.

Seidman explained she is free to expound on a wide range of topics and keeps her readers informed on local issues such as zoning, development, traffic, education and water quality.

Her column, "Seidman Says" can be found on the Herald-Tribune website, <https://www.heraldtribune.com/opinion>. A recent column dealt with the Sarasota school board while another column explored clean water as a human rights issue.

Seidman described the personal connection she's built up with her Florida readers and said communication from local residents lets her know where they stand on issues affecting them. Even though she's officially nonpartisan, she said she has received hate mail and even death threats concerning her written opinions.

She was asked if she's considered leaving Florida. She responded, "Yes, but I don't want to waste the opportunity to hopefully make a difference. It's a difficult climate to write opinion these days."

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## Volunteer for Advisory Board Positions

Democrats can affect change in Manatee County government, schools and services by volunteering for openings on advisory boards. Residents who volunteer for these boards bring knowledge, expertise, a fresh point of view and help balance representation of the boards.

Currently there is one board opening:

**School District Audit Committee** – Submit your resume and pertinent information that shows your qualifications to Laura E. Cox, [cox3l@manateeschool.net](mailto:cox3l@manateeschool.net). Phone 941-708-8770 ext. 41155, for more information. To learn more about the committee visit <https://www.manateeschools.net/Page/4761>.

To learn more about each of the county's advisory boards and qualifications for applicants, call 941-745-3700 or email [advisoryboards@mymanatee.org](mailto:advisoryboards@mymanatee.org) or go to: [www.mymanatee.org/government/advisory\\_boards](http://www.mymanatee.org/government/advisory_boards).

For board or committee vacancies in Manatee County cities, go to their respective web pages for more information:

**City of Bradenton:** <https://cityofbradenton.com/boards>.

**City of Palmetto:** <https://www.palmettofl.org/>.

**City of Anna Maria:**  
[https://www.cityofannamaria.com/government/boards\\_and\\_committees/index.php](https://www.cityofannamaria.com/government/boards_and_committees/index.php).

**City of Holmes Beach:** [holmesbeachfl.org](http://holmesbeachfl.org).

**City of Bradenton Beach:**  
<https://www.cityofbradentonbeach.com/191/Advisory-Boards>.

**Town of Longboat Key:** <https://www.longboatkey.org/town-government/boards-and-committees>.

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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!

**Receive our newsletter!** Was this email forwarded to you? Would you like to keep hearing from us?

**Donate Now**

**Upcoming Events**

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## Resource Links

**Florida Democratic Party**

**The Florida Channel**

**National Democratic Party**

**Manatee County Board of Commissioners**

## Headquarters Office

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## Hours

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

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