

Meeting Called to Order at 6:06 PM by Mark Frandsen, President

Invocation By: Mary Jepson

Pledge of Allegiance Led By: Sean Burroughs

All in attendance were required to sign in. Members in good standing received lanyards. No Audio or video recording is permitted.

A total of fifteen Dignitaries, Officials and Candidates were introduced. Guests were welcomed.

Mark began the meeting by noting that one of our featured speakers for the evening, Mr. Brad Baker a Candidate for SMH Board was not present. Consequently, we will allow extra time for each of the other speakers tonight.

Our next meeting will be on Monday, May 18th. Due to Memorial Day on the 4th Monday (25th) we changed the date. Please note this change.

The REC Statesman Dinner will be on May 11th. It is mostly sold out. A few tickets remain. Four persons will be honored. See Mark for Tickets.

Our Annual Candidate Picnic will be held on Saturday July 25th at the Scout House. Tickets are \$10 each for adults. Kids eat free. Club provides Burgers, Dogs, Buns, Condiments and beverages. Bring a side dish or dessert to pass. The REC Pie Rally in Sarasota will be the Week Before on July 18th. Yoder's pies will be featured again.

Ann Bunting the REC Election Coordinator is looking for Volunteers to call registered active Republican voters. The school board election in August is very important. We need a big Republican turnout. We have the registered voters. We just need to get them to the polls. Our club will need volunteers to staff the tents at early voting sites. Early voting August 8th through the 16th. Marian has prepared sign-up sheets. We need to determine how many locations we must staff for the early primary voting and the Primary Election day. Please consider helping us.

Mark then introduced our first speaker for the evening, Teresa DeWitt. She is a candidate for the school board, district #1. She has served in the Air Force and has family members with military service as well. She has degrees in Business Management, Social Services and Psychological Counseling. She spoke of her extensive and diverse experience in management and behavioral health counseling. Teresa has worked in private practice, home services and school districts across multiple states for 30 years.

Teresa discussed that over the last 30 years about 70% of school boards are controlled by Democrats. Sarasota is now a national focus of the Democratic Party. They want total control of our school board. In our district, 68% of 3rd graders read at grade level. But what about the other 32%? This is just one factor and we need to do better for all students.

She then took questions. One question concerned how to let voters know a candidate's priorities in a non-partisan election like the school board. This was defeated on the ballot last year. Voters need to learn the issues. How to return home-schooled students to the public school. Sarasota County Schools have lost 4000 students over the last few years. About 500 per year. We need to market our district to the parents and community. The chaos at the school board meetings also discourages parents.

Mental health services need to be addressed. Federal dollars are provided for this service to students, yet the monies are not earmarked or reserved for this care and are usually used for other things. Funds should be reserved for therapist care to students and not administration.

Our next speaker was Mr. James Buchanan. He is currently our 74th Florida House Representative. He will term out this year and is running for State Senator in the 22nd District which is also our area. He noted several current legislative topics. The state budget is underway. He will return to Tallahassee tomorrow for a special session called by the Governor. The special session will address re-districting. During the last legislative session they were unable to put the property tax issues on the ballot. Various options exist such as indexing non-school charges, phase out of taxes, straight reductions, etc. This would probably be for homestead owners only. The Governor and Senate need to work on this, not just the house. He could not discuss too many of the details because this is still under discussion and has not been resolved. He spoke about his work to help younger legislators learn how the house works.

Affordable housing is another complex issue that we face in Florida. Wide sweeping legislation may not be possible as the nuances of local zoning and community needs must be considered. About \$40-\$70 million of the budget could be available for our area. He hopes to continue his work and advocacy for us as Senator in the 22nd District.

The following topics were questions from the members. Road Safety is a concern. The many serious accidents on I-75. About 60-65% of the total regional appropriation is for transportation. Improvements should increase safety. Other questions and comments concerned the property tax issue. Voters need to understand how this will impact their community. It takes 1 to 2 years to see the effect of decreased housing costs and decreased assessed values. A member proposed a use of a flat tax per house rather than the continual fluctuating home values we now endure. This could be incorporated with other changes to the property tax methodology.

Meeting Ended at 7:26pm

Respectfully submitted,

Marian L. Patricoski, Secretary