

NEWSLETTER OF THE MANATEE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY



New Executive Committee Officers Elected

Under Florida statutes, all county Democratic Executive Committees (DECs) are part of the Florida Democratic Party (FDP) operating structure. The FDP Bylaws require DECs to hold their reorganization elections in December of every presidential election year.

The Democratic Executive Committee of Manatee County (DECMC) held its Organizational Meeting Dec. 22 via Zoom, and elected officers for two-year terms (four-year terms for State Committeeman and State Committeewoman).

See **OFFICERS, P2**

Manatee County Democratic

Executive Committee

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#ManateeTogether

Letter from the Chair

This is the second letter I have written for this edition of the newsletter.

The first one I wrote was so full of optimism as we were awaiting the final results of the Georgia Senate races, and it was looking really good for us. Not long after, I was rushing home in the middle of my work day to be with my family as the horror unfolded before us, and the world, on television.



As I read that first letter now, written less than a week ago, I am viscerally aware of how much has changed. The more we find out about the insurrection at the Capitol, the more it is revealed about how broken and divided we have become, and how close we came to losing our precious democracy.

I am inspired by the courage of our lawmakers, who, after suffering through a terrifying ordeal, returned immediately to certify a lawfully won election. Their courage will be honored for generations. They inspire us all by acknowledging that, under all circumstances, the work of democracy must continue.

Although the world has changed, I am still optimistic. Today, despite the best efforts of officials at the highest levels of our government, our Democratic Institutions still hold. Our states held fair and free elections, an independent judiciary followed the rule of law when those elections were challenged, and lawmakers (most of them) worked to certify a duly won election.

For the last four years, we have worked together to protect Democracy. We will continue this work now seeking to repair Democracy. I look forward to continuing this work with you.

- Tracy Pratt



Join our 2022 team! Start a monthly \$22 donation at ManateeCountyDemocrats.com/Donate. Elect local Democrats and retire DeSantis and Rubio.

OFFICERS continued from P1

Chair	Tracy Pratt	Treasurer	Ed Kumian
First Vice Chair	John Brackett	Federal Treasurer	Robin Sathan
Second Vice Chair— Internal Operations	Randi Sathan	Second Vice Chair—External Operations	Dan Coppinger
Secretary	Deb Pierce	State Committeeman	Rev. James Golden
		State Committeewoman	Florence Shelton-Clark

Voters Prefer Open Space To Development

Voters said yes to the “Water Quality, Fish and Wildlife Habitat Preservation and Parks” funding referendum, Nov. 3, sending a strong message to the Manatee County Commissioners that they prefer conservation over development. The referendum was accepted by 71 percent of voters.

Manatee County’s Parks and Natural Resources Department is expected to gather information about how other Florida counties have worked with similar voter referendums. The Board of Commissioners can expect recommendations and options sometime this year, though no timetable has been established.

A Commission spokesperson indicated there will be public input throughout the process.

The referendum gives Manatee County the green light to issue general obligation bonds of up to \$50 million in order to pay for land acquisitions. The average homeowner in the county may see about a \$29 annual property tax increase.

Currently, 13 percent of Manatee County land is preserved while other counties in Florida average about 30 percent of preserved land. Sarasota and Pinellas, along with 25 other Florida counties, have designated tax revenue for land preservation, according to published reports. - *Wil Clapper*

Caucus & Club Corner: *The Environmental Caucus*

There are many Democratic clubs and caucuses in Manatee County. Which ones might be a good fit to match your interests and talents? Each issue of Manatee Matters will turn the spotlight on one of these groups. See links at manateecountydemocrats.com/clubs-caucuses. - Wil Clapper

Focus: The Environmental Caucus focuses on issues at the local, state and national levels. It is concerned with bringing forth environmentally responsible candidates, increasing voter registration, promoting vote by mail efforts, acting as a technical/scientific resource and encouraging environmental stewardship.

Leadership: Bob McCaa – President; Jane Sellick – Vice President.

Activities: Work with local, regional and state environmental groups to further environmental education. Offer informative, science-based programs and events pertaining to the environment. Endorse Democratic and independent candidates that have solutions to environmental problems.

Current Membership: Approximately 30.

Needs: Social media activists with good communications skills to write posts, report on events and supply photos.

Meetings: Third Thursday of the month, 6 p.m., via Zoom.

More Information: manateecountydemocrats.com;
[facebook.com/manateedemocraticenvironmental](https://www.facebook.com/manateedemocraticenvironmental); eco.manateedems@gmail.com.



Democratic Winners in Manatee County

Pam Coachman, Bradenton City Council, Ward Five



Pam Coachman is an educator—a speech and language pathologist in the Manatee County School District—and her priorities reflect her professional background. “I want there to be better communication between the citizens and their city officials,” she says. “Ward Five sometimes just feels kind of like the forgotten child. And I think part of that is just communicating, because people want to know what’s going on, what’s going to affect them. I want them to understand what their city government does, to feel comfortable approaching city officials, not just finding things out at the last minute.”

Besides improved communication, Coachman’s priorities include implementation of the city’s comprehensive plan for systematic, on-schedule updating of the city’s infrastructure—roads, drainage systems, sidewalks, street lighting—and consistent code enforcement to hold homeowners, landlords and tenants accountable for correcting and, even better, preventing violations.

With Councilwoman Coachman’s victory, women now account for a majority of the council, “but, regardless of gender, I have the feeling council members will now be working together more than against each other.

“I don’t think I would have won this race without my party. Even though it was a nonpartisan race, I definitely felt a lot of support, and I really credit that for my win as well.”

Building on that nonpartisan spirit, she’s now focused on reaching out to the citizens of Bradenton. “I don’t know if it’s the educator in me,” she says, but she’s hoping to encourage more newcomers, like herself, to get involved in government. “It’s like, once you know more, you’ll do more. I want to educate people about what the city is doing—and educate the city to what the people’s needs are.” - *George McDermott*

Sheldon Jones, Palmetto City Commission, At-Large

Some future historian will surely suggest it was inevitable that Sheldon Jones would be elected to the Palmetto City Commission, since his personal story is so closely tied to the city.

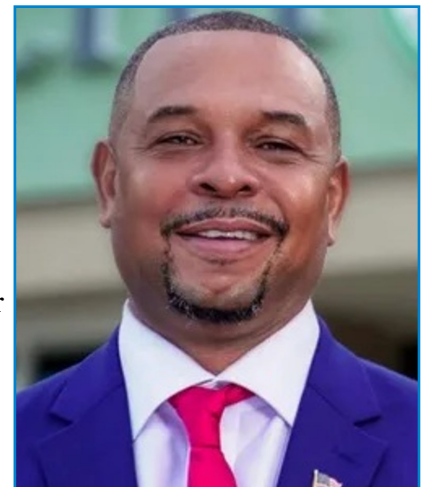
He’s a fourth-generation resident and a 17-year postal employee who has covered “pretty much the majority of routes inside the city,” interacting with its residents every day. “If they don’t know my name, they know I’m the mailman. They see the smile that I have when I put that uniform on, and I go and I meet those people. It brings joy to me to deliver for them.”

Now, he intends to deliver for them in an additional way, as a member of their City Commission, where he says he’ll focus on several priority areas.

First, he points out that Palmetto is “the only city in the Tampa Bay area without a housing authority, the only city that’s out of compliance. We’re starting to work on entry-level, affordable housing, but we still need to come together as a city and get it done.”

Another of his priorities is infrastructure—not only planned improvements in water mains, sewer lines and storm drainage, but also ongoing preventive maintenance—as well as community redevelopment and beautification to create “what everybody wants—a walkable downtown, a family atmosphere.” And these same improvements will help expand the city’s tax base. “Instead of the cost of service going up—like water bills—we need new tax revenue from new quality businesses, new tourism, new downtown nightlife.”

That’s why local politics is so important, he explains. “Local politics is what’s going to affect your daily life, so you need to get involved—for your kids, your family, your future.” - *George McDermott*



Vote-By-Mail Rocks!

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, Manatee Democrats voted in record numbers in November. The most impressive gains were seen in the vote-by-mail (VBM) numbers. More than 40,000 Democrats in the county voted by mail in 2020, compared to 21,582 in 2016. Thanks to campaigns by both the Black and Hispanic caucuses, VBM enrollments more than doubled for their respective constituencies. Phone bankers, postcard/letter writers, and canvassers were also essential for this great turnout.

Looking at turnout by racial/ethnic groups, more than 90 percent of those in each segment who enrolled in VBM voted. But only 54-60 percent of those who wanted to vote in person showed up at the polls, a 30-point spread. This means ease of voting is the problem, not apathy toward voting.

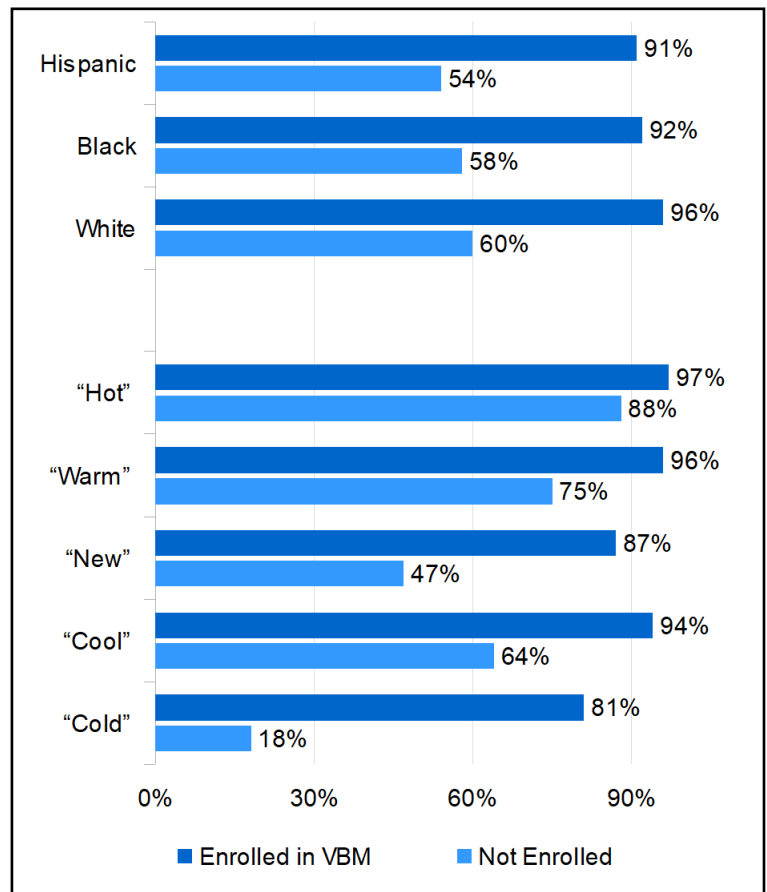
Another way to look at participation is by voter history:

- “Hots” voted in both 2016 and 2018.
- “Warm” voted in 2018, not 2016.
- “New” Democrats registered after the 2018 election. A 30-point spread for “New” voters (94 percent of VBM enrollees and 64 percent of those not enrolled voted) reveals the importance of simultaneously enrolling people to vote by mail when they register.
- “Cool” Democrats voted in 2016, but not 2018.
- “Cold” Democrats skipped voting in both 2016 and 2018. “Cold” Democrats had a huge 63-point spread: 81 percent of VBM enrollees cast ballots, while only 18 percent of those not enrolled took the time to vote.

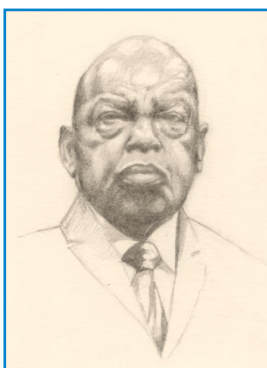
More than 35,000 Manatee Democrats are not yet enrolled to VBM, and 14,000 did not vote at all in November. There’s still work to be done!

- Bob McCaa & Nancy Hughes

2020 Manatee County Democrats Turnout: Mail vs. In-Person by Race/Ethnicity and by Voting History



Thank You Carmen Beecher



Carmen Beecher, artist and author, allowed us to use her sketch of John R. Lewis in the memorial we placed in several local newspapers and signed a print we presented as our First Annual John R. Lewis Memorial Award to Susie Copeland. In addition, Beecher donated a copy of her new book to our virtual auction, a collaboration with Hall of Fame songwriter, Bobby Braddock, *Country Music’s Greatest Lines: Lyrics, Stories and Sketches from American Classics*. This and her other books, *Dibble the Dragon* and *Crackers & Oranges* are available from Amazon. You can see her art at carmenbeecher.com. Thank you, Carmen Beecher, for supporting the Manatee County Democrats. - Robin Sathan