



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

1200 N. Telegraph Road, Bldg. 12 East, Pontiac, MI 48341

Democratic Caucus Minutes

March 12, 2024 at 5:00 PM

1. Call Meeting to Order

The Chair called the meeting of the Democratic Caucus to order at 5:05 p.m. in Committee Room A, 1200 N. Telegraph Road, 12E, Pontiac, MI 48341.

2. Roll Call

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Woodward, Gwen Markham (remote), Marcia Gershenson (remote), Angela Powell, Yolanda Smith Charles, Charles Cavell (remote), Ann Erickson Gault, Linnie Taylor (remote) (8)

MEMBERS ABSENT WITH NOTICE: Brendan Johnson, Penny Luebs, William Miller, Kristen Nelson, Ajay Raman (5)

3. Public Comment

No one addressed the Caucus during Public Comment #1.

4. Discussion Items

a. Board of Commissioners - 2024 County Commission Policy Agenda

Charlie Cavell addressed the Caucus to outline the five main Democratic Caucus policy goals for 2024. He identified these goals as:

- I. Lower Cost of Living for Working Families
- II. Reduce College Debt for County Residents and Employees
- III. Protect Democracy and the Right to Vote
- IV. Gun Violence Reduction
- V. Better Parks and Recreation Opportunities for All

Yolanda Smith Charles addressed the Caucus to ask how these goals line up with the goals of the Executive Office.

Gwen Markham addressed the Caucus to suggest focusing on the items that can be implemented within the year.

David Woodward addressed the Caucus to suggest focusing on the items that can be implemented within the next six months, in order to coincide with the County Budget timeline. He also stated that the Commissioners should be publicizing the goals that the Caucus is focusing on.

I. Lower Cost of Living for Working Families

- Expand Oakland Saves to reduce energy costs for more County households
- Eliminate medical debt for more County families
- Build more attainable housing
- Support higher wages for working families

Chair Angela Powell addressed the Caucus to state that some of these are more long term goals.

Discussion followed.

II. Reduce College Debt for County Residents and Employees

- Apply Technology tools to connect AI "auto-apply application" function for numerous loan payment reduction and forgiveness programs, and improve enrollment success
- Launch countywide campaign to promote use

Charlie Cavell addressed the Caucus regarding a new app that finds and fills forms for forgiveness programs.

Discussion followed.

III. Protect Democracy and the Right to Vote

- Fund education campaign (to combat misinformation)
- Establish a 2024 I Voted sticker contest
- Better transit to polling locations
- Support State legislative election and democracy reforms

David Woodward addressed the Caucus to suggest mailers and billboards to help combat misinformation.

Gwen Markham addressed the Caucus to inquire if the County could subsidize more pay for election workers.

Discussion followed.

IV. Gun Violence Prevention

- Create the Oakland County Office of Gun Violence Prevention
- Form task force for best implementation of Michigan's new red flag law
- Facilitate a gun safe storage education campaign

Marcia Gershenson addressed the Caucus to remind the Commissioners that

the Safer Communities Committee has also been working on some of these goals. The Safer Communities Committee meets again in April. She suggested the two groups get together at this meeting.

David Woodward addressed the Caucus to support approaching gun violence prevention as a public health issue.

Discussion followed.

V. Better Parks and Recreation Opportunities for All

- Create new County parks and improve local parks
- Fix aging park infrastructure in County parks system

Charlie Cavell addressed the Caucus and stated that Chris Ward, Director, Oakland County Parks and Recreation has a strong plan for parks and asked how the Caucus can support that.

Gwen Markham addressed the Caucus and suggested that free entry to the Oakland County parks system should be an eventual goal.

Yolanda Smith Charles addressed the Caucus and stated that infrastructure needs attention in all of our parks. She suggested a program to assist the local CVTs in applying for funding for their local parks.

Discussion followed.

Chair Angela Powell conducted a poll to see which goals group the Commissioners present are most interested in working on.

Charlie Cavell addressed the Caucus and stated that the next step should be to contact the absent Commissioners to see which goal groups they are interested in working on.

David Woodward addressed the Caucus and stated that another Caucus on this subject should be scheduled in three weeks. He suggested the possibility of Friday, April 5th.

Michael Andrews, Interim Chief of Staff, Oakland County Board of Commissioners, addressed the Caucus and stated that the Caucus should check in with the Executive Office on these issues to make sure efforts are not being duplicated.

Chair Angela Powell addressed the Caucus to urge these groups to meet prior to April 5, 2024.

5. Public Comment

Fred Miller, Deputy Oakland County Clerk/Register of Deeds addressed the Caucus during Public Comment #2.

6. Adjournment

The meeting recessed at 6:33 p.m.