

Johnson County Democratic Party Committee Meeting Minutes

• May 01, 2018 •

Call to order

Meeting called to order at 7:10 by Vice Chair Harmon. There were 11 people present. A sign-in sheet was circulated. Pledge of allegiance was reiterated.

Reports and Announcements

Kay moved to accept minutes from previous meeting as presented. Chris seconded. Passed unanimously.

Treasurer's report. \$1724.07 checking balance at last meeting. Gain of \$88.00 since then. Current checking balance is \$1812.07. Lois moved to accept Treasurer's report. Vanessa seconded and motion passed unanimously.

Some announcements from the floor about summer state convention and some discussion about bringing thoughts on state bylaws and platform planks.

Guest Speaker

Chris Harmon introduced Craig Cope, retired from 39 years in the US Forest Service. 31 years in Wyoming. Mr. Cope introduced his talk would be about public lands. In various states there are individuals and groups pushing a belief that federal lands belong under state control or ownership. Mr. Cope summarized the 200 year history of public lands in the western U.S. and how they got that way. This included a summary of Congressional acts, federal purchases, etc. and methods of disposing of western lands obtained in various ways. Turns out there were several decisions made during this time period that, in hindsight, entertained our group quite a lot.

Late 1800s started the reservation phase where large tracts were set aside as public lands and not included in homesteading allotments. Homesteading in Wyo peaked after WWI.

Starting in Utah, some cases claiming federal lands were never purchased from the state were brought to court. Arguments ranged from history of Feds never having purchased the land from the states to using various interpretations of words such as "shall", and their historical and present day usage. Mr. Cope presented many legal opinions from attorney generals, legislators and committees of elected officials. In all of these the arguments proffered by proponents of transferring public lands rested on rest on weak legal foundations.

Mr. Cope reminded us of and read aloud the "Property Clause" of U.S. Constitution (article IV section 3.2).

Mr. Cope shared some excerpts from a Tom Lubnau piece where in Lubnau claimed Wyoming never owned the lands in the first place. Lubnau also points out the portions of the Wyoming constitution that expressly state the people "forever disclaim all right and title" to the lands in question. Also, we learned homesteading stopped altogether in 1976.

Mr. Cope then moved on to discuss the more recent economics of land ownership in the state. Energy is largest revenue producer. Agriculture as of 2010 was 1.2% of Wyoming's Gross Domestic Product. Recreation and Tourism \$887 billion in US., According to 2016 numbers from the Nat'l Park Service saw \$680 million in revenue from Yellowstone. 2016 Buffalo Bulletin article showed \$49.5 million in Johnson County. Meanwhile, Johnson County agriculture in 2010 showed \$23 million. In

2010 only 9 Wyoming counties showed positive agriculture revenue. In recent years Yellowstone has been having record setting attendance. Mr. Cope showed many numbers of usage and income from public lands. He then pointed out that of the U.S. discretionary budget only 0.81% goes to managing federal lands.

Public lands are a long term economic driver for western states and Wyoming in particular. Locally, some of the private ownership of assets on the forest service lands are missed opportunities for the forest service to be more self-sufficient. (e.g. when revenue from private assets goes into a general fund and doesn't return to the Forest Service).

Two online resources: keepitpublicwyo.com and trcp.org. Mr. Cope left his references with Greg if anybody would like to take a look through them.

Old Business

Greg reported having two conflicting versions of the JC Dems platform. Vanessa said there's only one version that counts. John moved to return two versions to the platform committee for reconciliation. Chris seconded. Greg will provide those files to the committee within 48 hours. Motion passed with one voting against.

New business.

County Clerk is seeking democrats to fill election judges. There is a need to keep as close to 50/50 party split in judges. It isn't clear if Independents count, but they can certainly be judges. Anyone interested in being an election judge should visit with County Clerk Edelman at the old courthouse.

Adjournment

Vanessa moves to adjourn. Lois seconded. Motion to adjourn passed at 9:00pm.