**Democratic Club of Willow Valley**

**General Meeting**

**January 28, 2025**

**Attendance: 62**

President Jen Porter opened the meeting at 1 p.m. and welcomed attendees. She then gave an overview of the State of the Club 2024 including accomplishments, finances, communications with members and non-members, membership increase, political involvement, plans for further education and speaker topics, involvement in community actions, and a reorganizing and rebranding of the Club. She also explained that the Club is in the process with the IRS to have an official name change to “Democratic Club of Willow Valley”. Until the Club receives approval from the IRS for the change, membership campaign efforts are on hold.

 The complete content of President Porter’s presentation is attached.

**Advocacy:**

* **“Jimmy Carter 2025”** President Porter has planned a monthly focus on the achievements of our late President Jimmy Carter. Each month members will receive information about concrete actions they may take to carry forth the work President Carter accomplished during his term and in his later life.
* Advocacy Chair Bonanno asked attendees to contact their legislators about concerns over the Trump administration moves in the early days of his term. She has available contact information.

**New Website:**

* Vice-President Ross Fairweather offered a slide presentation of the new Club website: [**www.DemsWVC.com**](http://www.DemsWVC.com)**.** The site is online now but needs further work to enable the membership application to work smoothly. Two avenues exist: (1) contact an experienced website creator in the area (2) contact GoDaddy, for further assistance.
* Ross presented the proposed cost of further assistance from GoDaddy with a breakdown.
	+ $275 Premium Store Design Services – one year
	+ $2,799.99 Premium Store Build Fee package – one year of unlimited services
	+ $1,115.88 Marketing Services Basic – one year
	+ Total $4,191.75 with a credit for prorated purchase cost of website in October ($1,334,97, leaving a total cost for 2025, including PA sales tax, of **$3,028.17**
* **Motion:** The Democratic Club of Willow Valley move forward with the funding of the website as presented. (Babcock/Kaufman). **Motion carried.**

**Speakers and Topics:**

 In July 2024 members received a questionnaire asking for ideas for topics and speakers for future meetings and *Understanding Our Democracy* sessions. **Below** is a list of the most addressed topics and the plan for meetings at which they will be presented. Topics include those covering political, educational, and other issues.

January - Understanding Our Democracy:

What happens if Trump wins? Losses? Civil War?

Democratic Policies & Strategies // How to Strengthen our Democracy

What is “Democracy?” How do we not lose it?

February - General Meeting (speaker Lissa Holland)

Public Library

March - General Meeting (speaker Jamie Arroyo, candidate for City mayor)

Local issues, local politics, local candidates

Official speaking on bills and current issues

March - Understanding Our Democracy

Role of Senate verses Executive Branch

Discussion on “Electoral College”

Supreme Court abuse

April – General Meeting

Regulations on/for PA voters

Listing of accomplishments of Local Democrats

State Issues

TBD – Understanding Our Democracy

Demographic analysis of local & State registered voters – Dems/Rep/Ind**.**

New WVC Club – Climate Change; see their programs via Insider

Conduct meetings via Zoom: unable to do this in the Education Room or the Ballroom

**Update to Bylaws:**

A copy of the current bylaws was presented with a copy of proposed changes to be voted on in the next General Meeting in February. Changes to be voted on appear as follows in bold print:

* **Name** change from “Willow Valley Democrats +” to Democratic Club of Willow Valley”
* **Article II:** **Mission** to replace **Purpose**:

**“Our mission is to tackle bread-and-butter issues while protecting and lifting up our vulnerable populations via:**

* + **Offering educational programs aimed at widespread issues;**
	+ **Providing guest speakers who keep us informed;**
	+ **Endorsing local Democratic candidates and providing financial support;**
	+ **Offering a scholarship to local high-school students;**
	+ **Keeping our constituents informed through monthly newsletters;**
	+ **Promoting more progressive legislation and government at all levels.**
* **Article III: Membership**: to read “All eligible voters of party affiliation, who support the purpose of the Club, **who are Residents of Willow Valley or SmartLife members, and** who reside in the **Lakes or Locust precincts** are qualified for membership. Interested parties may request membership in the Club by making an annual, voluntary contribution. Any contribution is welcome, but a suggested amount will be determined by the Executive Board. Membership in the Club entitles **paid-up** members to vote on officers and vote on changes to these bylaws.
* **Article IV: Officers/Executive Board:** Bullet point #2: The Vice President shall assist the President in program planning **and execution** and fulfilling the duties of the President when the President is unavailable. The Vice President may approve expenditures.
* **Article V:** **Elections:** Officers shall be members of the Club **serving two-year terms.** They are normally elected at the first meeting of the calendar year. The President and Secretary shall be elected in even-numbered years; the Vice President and Treasurer shall be elected in odd-numbered years. The Executive Board will nominate a slate of candidates that will be distributed by email to the membership at least two weeks prior to the election. At the meeting at which any election takes place nominations from the floor will be entertained. Officers may serve multiple terms. In the event that a vacancy does occur, the officer chosen to fill that position shall **be appointed by the President and will** serve for the remainder of that term.

**Candidates for office 2025:**

Steve Wright – Treasurer

 Ross Fairweather – Vice President

These candidates will be voted on at the February 25 General Meeting.

**Suggestions from members attending:**

* Terry Webb suggested a bus trip of members to legislators, local and U.S., to put forth our views as a group.
* Barbara Bonanno urged members to contact Lloyd Smucker, Dave McCormick, and Ryan Aument (McCormick’s State Director) to express their views.

**Upcoming Events:** all meetings in Education Room of Cultural Center

***Understanding******Our Democracy****:*

Tuesday, February 18, 10 a.m.**:** Panel discussion: joint *Understanding our Democracy* session with Racism Awareness Group and LGBTQ+

Tuesday, March 18, 10 a.m**.:** Minority Rule: How Our Constitution Imperils Our Democracy and how to address it.

**General Meeting:**

Tuesday, February 25, 1 p.m. with speaker Lissa Holland, Executive Director of the Lancaster Public Library to speak on issues of censorship and acquisition.

Lucy Painter, Secretary

**State of our Club**

**Overview**

* We supported candidates nationally as well as on the state level.
* We continued our outreach efforts to increase voter turnout.
* We have made great progress in educating our Willow Valley Residents.
* 2024 also saw the separation of Willow Valley Democrats Plus from the Lampeter-Strasburg Democratic Committee.

Willow Valley Democrats Plus has reason to celebrate some successes, but 2025 is showing that we have some challenging work ahead.

**Membership**

* Our membership as of December 2024 was 284.
* Our membership at the close of 2023 was 181.
* That increase of 103 members is due to the excellent work of Julia Powers.
* She encouraged the completion of a project to call all Democrats in Willow Valley, asking them to consider club membership.
* Julia and volunteers in the club made around 600 phone calls.

**Treasury**

* Our beginning balance for 2024 was $3,373.51.
* Our ending balance was $4,934.67 ($ 1,500 difference).
* Our 2024 expenses were $13,481.18.
* Our members were very generous with donations of $ 8,035.07 which facilitated our outreach efforts and candidate support.
* Donation highlights:

May 27th: $1000 each to our three local L-S candidates Bob Rudy State House, Trex Proffitt State Senate, Jim Atkinson US Congress.

July 9th: $1000 Scholarship to Bethany Helms.

August 29th: $500 to Water Street Mission.

October 7th: $2,000 Jim Atkinson, $1,000 Trex Proffitt, $1,000 Bob Rudy

November 24th: Bob Rudy returned $350 of our donation.

**Communications**

* Lucy’s excellent minutes of club meetings made the task of writing this address easier.
* Ross has published and distributed 11 electronic monthly club newsletters. She has also produced our slide presentations for our monthly club meetings and is currently developing our club website.
* Jerry hosted his monthly *Understanding Our Democracy Series*.
* Barbara coordinated postcard efforts for getting out the vote.
	+ Seniors Taking Action
	+ Moms Rising GOTV
	+ Grandmothers for a Brighter Future
	+ Fair Funding PA Schools.
	+ We also mailed postcards to L-S voters who had not returned their mail-in ballots or had not requested their mail-in ballots.
* ***202 volunteers completed 5,371 postcards.***
* Julia surveyed club members in May asking for suggestions. 95 questionnaires were returned and tabulated by Julia which was quite a task. This compilation has given our club guidelines for 2025 and beyond.

**Greeters**

Greeters make a huge difference at the polls. Democrats at our tables hand out sample ballots, answer questions and SMILE, giving a positive lift to voters.

* LOCUST: 28 at the Primary Election, 14 at the General Election.
* LAKES: There were 28 greeters at both our Primary Election and our General Election.
* In November, Lakes and Locust greeters were sent to four precincts outside of Willow Valley (Lyndon, Lampeter, Willow Street, and Strasburg).

**Political Involvement**

* We collected petition signatures to support Trex Proffitt, our write-in candidate for our State Senate seat.
* We collected signatures for our Democratic candidates on the Primary 2024 ballot.
* We mailed postcards to encourage L-S voter turnout and to support Bob Casey.
* We had members who canvassed throughout the Lampeter-Strasburg district.
* ***Kamala Harris won the Lakes precinct by 169 votes. Harris won Locust by 31 votes.***

**Guest Speakers**

* Chris Wakeley, Pennsylvania House Education Committee
* Lauren Kuntz, Willow Street Precinct
* Eugene DePasquale, Candidate for PA Attorney General
* Keith Shetter, Water Street Mission
* Mary Lou Alsentzer, Lampeter-Strasburg District Leader
* Danene Sorace, Mayor Lancaster City
* Alice Yoder, Lancaster County Commissioner
* Izzy Smith-Wade-El, Candidate for PA State House 49th District
* Bob Rudy, Candidate for PA State House 97th District
* Trex Proffitt, Candidate for PA State Senate 13th District
* Jim Atkinson, Candidate for US Congress 11th District

**Education Topics**

* January - America’s Working Class
* February – CAP of Lancaster County
* March - Discrimination in Healthcare
* April - Christian Nationalism
* May - K-12 Public Education Funding in PA
* June - Lead Poisoning
* August - Project 2025: A View From The States
* August - Project 2025: The Far-Reaching Consequences
* September - Project 2025: Overall Themes and Key Elements
* September - How Trauma Shapes How We Handle Divisive Subjects With Others
* October - *God & Country*: A Film On Christian Nationalism
* October - Character and Fitness for Office Matter!
* November - 2024 Election: Preliminary Review

**Community Outreach**

* Our L-SHS Scholarship for Community Service was awarded in May for the 15th year in a row.
* Our club scheduled a field trip in July 2024 to Water Street Mission; sign-ups were so good we had to book a second trip in August.
* Annabelle Simpson coordinated 29 volunteers for the West Lampeter Community Fair.

**Reorganization & Rebranding**

* New name and logo, mission and vision statements, business cards, stationery and banners (three horizontal, one retractable). Materials were first used at the 2025 Club Expo.
* A membership chair will be added in 2025, offloading the Treasurer.

Our board deserves our support, and we thank them for their hard work.

* + President Jen Porter
	+ Vice President Ross Fairweather
	+ Secretary Lucy Painter
	+ Treasurer Julia Powers
	+ Advocacy Chair Barbara Bonanno
	+ Education Chair Jerry Henige

For the Record ….

* The IRS is holding up the official change of our name due to staffing shortages.
* This means we can’t change banks (to one more affordable).
* Our membership campaign efforts will be on hold.
* But we can and will proceed with using our new name moving forward.