



January 2023

Copyright 2023 Waupaca County Democratic Party

Next meeting: 10:30 a.m. Jan. 14, 2023, Manawa office

Dems officers are elected before Manawa celebration

The 10th of December was a big Saturday at the headquarters of the Waupaca County Democratic Party (WCDP) in Manawa.

The election of Executive Board officers was held in the morning. With seven members present in the Manawa office and another six by Zoom, four officers were re-elected: Chair Stuart Walter; secretary Barb Kobs, treasurer Tracy Walter, and sergeant at arms Tom Olson.

Henry Fries was elected to the post of vice-chair, vacant for more than a year. In the fall, members had voted to change the county-party constitution to elect all officers to two-year terms that coincide with the two-year national cycle from midterm elections to presidential voting years. The changes included allowing voting by electronic connection such as Zoom. The state Democratic Party approved the changes on Dec. 7.

Chair Stu Walter will convene a board meeting in January to discuss the duties and requirements for the

Continued on page 6



Fireworks over Manawa closed the city's Miracle on Bridge Street holiday celebration on Dec. 10, 2022. At left is the headquarters for the Waupaca County Democratic Party.

Volunteer photo

Prepare to vote in 2023 – February and April

Spring elections 2023 will involve the state supreme court (see page 2), 4th District Court of Appeals (see page 2), school boards, county offices and every elective town, village and city office. Ballots will be set after the Jan. 3 filing deadline.

The nonpartisan primary is Feb. 21. The general election is April 4. To register to vote, see my vote.wi.gov or consult the clerk of your local municipality.

2023 – primary in February, general in April

2 forums in early January for Wisconsin Supreme Court candidates

A forum with candidates for the Wisconsin Supreme Court will be held at noon Monday, Jan. 9, 2023, in the Lecture Hall at the Monona Terrace Convention Center, 1 John Nolan Drive, Madison, Wis. Attendance is free, but visitors must register at the website of sponsor WisPolitics.com.

A forum for only Democratic and progressive candidates for the high court will be held by Zoom at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2023, sponsored by Citizen Action of Wisconsin. After registration at citizenactionwi.link/supremecourtforum, a Webinar link will be provided near the time of the event.

Only two of the four nonpartisan candidates will advance from the Feb. 21 primary to the April 4 general election. With conservative Justice Patience Roggensack retiring, the election could shift the

court’s ideological balance to a liberal majority. Currently it has a 4-3 conservative majority.

Running as liberal candidates are Dane County Judge Everett Mitchell and Milwaukee County Judge Janet Protasiewicz. The two conservative candidates are Waukesha County Judge Jennifer Dorow and former Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Dan Kelly.

The three candidates who spoke on Dec. 2 before a group of Milwaukee trial lawyers all stressed they want to keep politics off the bench. Dorow had to cancel at the last minute. wispolitics.com; jsonline.com; citizenactionwi.org



Everett Mitchell
Henry Fries campaign



Janet Protasiewicz
Protasiewicz campaign

Taylor running for 4th District Court of Appeals

The Wisconsin Elections Commission has certified 1,748 signatures supporting the candidacy of Chris Taylor for District 4 Court of Appeals, which includes Waupaca County. The minimum requirement is 1,000 signatures.

By Zoom, Taylor visited the Dec. 3 meeting of the Waupaca County Democratic Party. Her appellate-court campaign calls her “a voice for reason and progress as a judge” in the Dane County Circuit Court Branch 12, working for fairness, equity and justice. She was appointed by Gov. Tony Evers in 2020 and elected in 2021 to a term that ends in 2027.

She served nine years in the state Assembly, District 76, which is contained within the city of Madison. She first won the seat in a special election, August 2011.

She is endorsed by all five current members of the District 4 court, which includes 24 counties, mostly in southwest and south-central Wisconsin.

ChrisforJustice.com; ballotpedia.org; docs.legis.Wisconsin.gov



Chris Taylor, candidate for 4th District Court of Appeals, is on the bench of the Dane County Circuit Court. *Taylor campaign*

Progressives win when progressives vote – VOTE

Some county school books face ‘requests for reconsideration’

Every year, two or more spots are open in each Waupaca County school district for election of school board members. Looking at the 2023 elections, *Paca Blue News* focused on the national agitation to remove books from student access because of content.

At least 1,648 book titles were banned in U.S. schools from July 2021 to June 2022, according to PEN America’s Index of School Book Bans. A map with the Index shows Wisconsin with 26-50 bans in that time frame.

The books are a pretext, Ashley Hope Pérez, author of the banned book *Out of Darkness*, told the *Wisconsin Examiner*. “(Book banning) is a proxy war on students who share the marginalized identities of the authors and characters in the books under attack.”

School officials and librarians in Waupaca County who spoke with *Paca Blue News* indicated they prefer such language as “requests for reconsideration” or “book challenges,” instead of “bans.”

PEN America, a nonprofit that says it works to defend and celebrate free expression in the United States and worldwide, defines a book ban as “any action taken against a book based on its content ... that leads to a previously accessible book being either completely removed from availability to students, or where access to a book is restricted or diminished.”

Of the seven school districts in Waupaca County, only a few have reported requests for reconsideration of books shelved in school libraries. Several said they have had no challenges in recent memory.

PEN America said that 81% of its banned Index books were split between those that featured themes or characters in the community of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered, queers, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA+), and those that featured primary or secondary characters of color.

The rest of the banned books had themes of race and racism, sexual content, rights and activism, such life stories as memoirs, and religious minorities. Some books contained more than one such theme.

Manawa is the only district that had a book challenge reported in the news columns of the *Waupaca County Post* newspaper. In December 2021, it reported a complaint to the Manawa School District that *Looking for Alaska* by John Green “contains sexually explicit encounters in detail, bad language and normalizes dishonesty, hazing, underage drinking and smoking.”

(*Paca Blue News* note: All those elements are present within the context of well-written character development of high school boarding students. In 2006, the book won the Michael L. Printz award from the American Library Association [ALA].)

In following the district procedures, a review committee “recommended that the book be retained in the library,” said District Administrator Melanie Opper. She said that current district policy is that students under 16 need a parental permission slip to check out any books labeled “YA” (Young Adult). The ALA defines young adults as individuals between 12 and 18 years of age.

‘Parents, you choose’

Manawa School Board President Sondra Reiersen told *Paca Blue News* that she had “a list of materials I had questions about” when she was first elected to the board in 2021. She stressed that, in expressing views to *Paca Blue News*, “I’m not speaking for the board” or relaying any policy voted on by the board.

Speaking of her list as a private individual, she asked, “How do we assess the materials coming into school? What is the screening process?”

She spoke of “several books with very graphic adult content — gang rape, prostitution

School books continued on page 4

School books continued from page 3 for drugs, incest.” Adding that such content is available through the internet and other sources, she said that access to school materials needs to be assessed differently from access via a source open to the public.

She suggested the evaluation, “If a movie were made of this book, what would the rating be?”

In 1968, the Motion Picture Association of America started ratings suggesting audience suitability. The range of ratings since 1996 has been from G, “for general audiences,” through NC-17, “adults only — no one 17 and under admitted.” NC-17 replaced the earlier X rating.

With the parental permission slip in Manawa, “We’re trying to give parents informed consent,” Reiersen said. “Parents, you choose.”

‘Why would we remove it?’

Clintonville School District

Superintendent Troy Kuhn said that one book had been challenged about three or four years ago in his district. “A grandparent wanted an adult comic book” removed. *Check, Please! Book 1: #Hockey* by Ngozi Ukazu is a graphic novel with “some sexual themes, some vulgarity,” Kuhn said.

“These are themes being discussed today, so why would we remove it from the shelves?”

(*Paca Blue News* note: Its story of a college hockey team includes locker-room talk with the F-word and tension, success, and failure in areas from the ice rink to romance, gay and straight.)

Book reconsideration “is a hot topic around the nation, but, regardless, if it’s a hot topic, it’s best to have a procedure in place,” Kuhn said. “Having a committee is the most important part of that procedure.”

No challenges reported

New London School District

Administrator Scott Bleck said by email that streamlined administrative guidelines were adopted to address questions should a parent/guardian raise concerns about materials.

“The form we introduced in September

for parent information may have been the source of this misinformation [that access to books had been removed in New London]. We always have limited access to YA books to begin in grades 7-8 unless parents would like to opt their children into that level of material. This is based on library guidelines that have been long in place but were formalized into a one-page document to help clarify.

“We did not move, remove or change access at any level,” Bleck wrote.

Waupaca School Board President Stephen Johnson wrote in an email, “During my tenure on the Board of Education, the Board has not received any ‘challenges’ to books in the District that were intended to lead to the banning of said books.”

Johnson attached the district’s complaint policy, which includes a review by a nine-member panel and a stipulation that the chair of the panel “will provide information to the news media.”

In the Weyauwega-Fremont School District, officials reported no book challenges within memory. They said that their process, including a review panel, is developed in conjunction with Neola, a for-profit organization that updates districts on policies and laws that affect schools.

Two additional districts responded via email that they have had no book challenges. Marion School District Administrator Troy Edwards wrote, “We have not had any book challenges that I am aware of.”

Iola-Scandinavia School District Administrator Ray Przekurat wrote, “We have had no formal book challenges at I-S schools.”

pen.org; filmratings.com; ala.org; wikipedia.org; neola.com; nytimes.com; wisconsinexaminer.com; thecentercv.org

Correction

On page 5 of the December edition, *Paca Blue News* incorrectly stated the status of the Respect for Marriage Act, H.R. 8404, passed by the Senate on Nov. 29. It was returned to the House, which passed it Dec. 8. President Biden signed it on Dec. 13.

Salute to service members

— No January dates emphasize military service or action.
 — The Waupaca County Veterans Service Office can help active-duty service members, veterans or dependents receive benefits and services earned through honorable military service. 715-258-6475.

waupacacounty-wi.gov



Cultural days

New Year's Day, Jan. 1 — The date is the start of a new year in the Gregorian calendar used by most world countries. The earliest recorded festivities in honor of a new year, an 11-day religious festival, came about 4,000 years ago in ancient Babylon, a city whose ruins are in present-day Hillah, Iraq.

history.com; wikipedia.org

Kwanzaa ends, Jan. 1 — Dr. Maulana Karenga created the week-long Kwanzaa celebration of African-American values in 1966, “in the midst of the Black Freedom Movement, in the wake of the

assassination and martyrdom of Haji Malcolm X and the Watts Revolt,” he said in his 2022 annual message.

officialkwanzaawebsite.org;
spokesman-recorder.com

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Jan. 16 — The Day of Service (MLK Day) is the only federal holiday that is also designated by Congress as a national day of service – a “day on, not a day off,” says the Department of the Interior. The civil-rights leader was assassinated in 1968.

doi.gov

Poem of the month — inauguration series

Continuing the *Paca Blue News* series about inauguration poets, which left off in September 2022, is the choice by President Bill Clinton (1993-2001) for his second inauguration. Miller Williams (1930-2015), a native of Clinton's Arkansas, had known Clinton since 1974 when he volunteered in Clinton's first, unsuccessful run for Congress. The poet, editor, critic, translator and teacher eventually spent 32 years at the University of Arkansas.

Williams said one of his favorite quotes about his work was by a critic: “One of the best things that has ever been said about my work was said by a critic who wrote that ‘Miller Williams is the Hank Williams of American

poetry. While his poetry is taught at Princeton and Harvard, it's read and understood by squirrel hunters and taxi drivers.’ ”

Williams looks from the past to the future in this fragment from his inauguration poem for Clinton, “Of History and Hope,” collected in *Some Jazz A While: Collected Poems* (1999).

But how do we fashion the future? Who can say how except in the minds of those who will call it Now? The children ...

poetryfoundation.org; jimnewsom.com

Quotes of the month — from Ukraine leaders

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Dec. 22, 2022, speaking in English before the U.S. Congress — “Your money [for military aid to Ukraine] is not charity. It's an investment in the global security and democracy . . .”

Ukraine First Lady Olena Zelenska, July 20, 2022, translated from Ukranian as she spoke before the U.S. Congress — “I am asking for weapons . . . that would not be used to wage a war on somebody else's land but to protect one's home and the right to wake up alive in that home.”

president.gov.ua; vogue.com; rev.com

Summary of minutes

Summary from Dec. 3 meeting.

-- Treasurer Tracy Walter will close the books by Dec. 31 for the campaign-finance report to the state party.

-- Chair Stu Walter reported that Ben Wikler, state Dem chairperson, requests feedback before Jan. 6 for what works and what doesn't work for elections at the local and state level.

— Election of county officers was postponed until Dec. 10 because the state party, which needs to approve the constitutional changes from November, wouldn't meet until Dec. 7.

From minutes by secretary Barb Kobs



Members of the Waupaca County Democratic Party have a comfy place to gather at the headquarters, 401 S. Bridge St. Manawa. Among those meeting on Dec. 3 were, from left, Georgia Calvo, Dave Kropilnicki, treasurer Tracy Walter, secretary Barb Kobs, Chair Stu Walter, and sergeant at arms Tom Olson. The four officers were re-elected at the Dec. 10 meeting.

Volunteer photo

Dems officers are elected before Manawa celebration

Continued from page 1

three at-large voting members, whose terms expire every December.

From election mode, the office swung into civic-celebration mode. Office volunteers welcomed people attending Miracle on Bridge Street, Manawa's annual holiday festival. Candy was given to kids — about 140 — after they

spun a game wheel to discover how many pieces they could have. Editions of the newsletter, Paca Blue News, were given to visiting adults.

The evening events were led by a parade, which was easily viewed from the Dems headquarters because the route goes right past the office at 401 S. Bridge Street. Fireworks ended the evening.

Former officer of WCDP honored at UW-Stevens Point



Collin McNamara

Collin McNamara, a former vice chair of the Waupaca County Democratic Party, was honored in December at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point with a Chancellor's Leadership Award in the category of political science. The awards for seniors were for their "leadership, demonstrated university and/or community service and for having a commitment to personal growth throughout their #UWSP career."

McNamara said he joined the party in 2014 at the age of 14. He served as a student organizer, sergeant at arms, and, from 2017-2019, was co-vice chair and vice-chair. He is serving the Portage County Democratic Party as an at-large member of the Executive Board.

The 2018 graduate of Iola-Scandinavia High School was graduated in December from UW-SP with a B.A. in political science and a certificate in international relations.

College of Letters and Science at UWSP