

Southern Mecklenburg Republican Club

August 2008 Meeting

Minutes

THE MEETING WAS HELD ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 28, 2008, AT GOLDEN CORRAL, CHARLOTTE, NC, AT 6:30 P.M.

I. **Welcome**

Ken Nelson opened the meeting, welcoming our members and guests. Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. **Club Business**

Ken conducted an update from Meck GOP headquarters, touching on several issues we will be focusing on in local elections this fall. Among them were property taxes (which Republicans want to keep steady), education in Char-Meck schools (which Republicans consider too administration-intensive), and public safety (in which Republicans would like to see an increase in both prosecutors and police patrols). Susan Thomas with the McCrory gubernatorial campaign announced that she needs volunteers for canvassing, sign distribution, and poll work. Ken announced the opening of the Victory 2008 office, a combination of federal races in North Carolina, which needs volunteers and donations. Christian Greve with the Susan Walker County Commission at-large campaign asked for volunteers, saying we need to win at least 2 of the at-large County Commission seats to take a majority of that body. Christian also announced that the Young Republicans are selling raffle tickets to benefit the USO. The winner will receive a \$1,000 expense-paid trip to Puerto Rico. Ken Nelson announced that he is holding a fundraiser/wine-tasting for Susan Walker at his home on Friday, September 12, and also announced that Dr. B.J. Lawson, a Republican running for the 4th U.S. House District seat, will be at the home of Pat Armstrong on Sunday, September 28th, for a meet-and-greet. Judge Ben Thallheimer announced that he is seeking re-election to the 26th Judicial Court District, and that he possesses the experience necessary to do the job.

III. **Discussion**

The club was treated to a panel discussion on crime and public safety. Julie Eiselt of Neighbors for a Safer Charlotte spoke about her personal experience with violent crime, and how it inspired her to found this non-profit organization. She pointed to the excessive caseload at the D.A.'s office, combined with its lack of a centralized computer system as issues contributing to her assailant not being prosecuted. Deputy Chief Jerry Sennett gave some statistics about Charlotte's rapid growth and population size as compared with the size of the police force, emphasizing that there was no increase in police resources between 2000 and 2005. He acknowledged that there has been a 1% uptick in property crime in early 2008, but pointed out that violent crime was down 3% over the same period. He speculated that the increase in

property crimes was a result in repeat offenders opting for less violent, more profitable criminal activity, and gave tips on preventing such crimes, such as making sure doors are locked and garage doors are shut. Matthew Rupp from the District Attorney's elaborated on the problems associated with not having a centralized case file system, which causes files to be more easily lost and lengthy delays in court proceedings, which leads to jail overcrowding and increases the potential for violent offenders to be turned loose on the streets. He said that of roughly 3,000 drug-related cases the D.A.'s office sees per year, only 40-45 actually come to trial. During Mr. Rupp's talk, a couple of members expressed concerns about D.A. Peter Gilchrist, but Mr. Rupp said that Mr. Gilchrist is working to increase the size of the D.A.'s office staff, and that funding problems were a result of a lack of state funds. Another member mentioned having met with Dan Clodfelter, and of learning that since each county's D.A. is elected individually, they must compete with each other for state-allocated funding, and that this is complicated by the fact that since state government funds prisons, the state has little motivation to help expedite convictions, which would grow the state prison population. Deputy Chief Sennett stated that the time may have come for more creative solutions at the local level, since state-level politics so often chokes municipal court systems. He said that a privately-owned chain of auto accident investigators would take the massive workload of investigating every single fender-bender in Mecklenburg County from the CMPD, which would free them up to handle more violent crimes. Edwin Peacock and Warren Cooksey of the City Council agreed with the idea in theory, but pointed out the complications that would come from drafting legislation to set up a system like that. Ruth Samuelson of the N.C. House agreed, adding that state laws might prevent such a private system, even if municipal ones don't. She added that she and Mr. Clodfelter face an uphill battle in Raleigh getting Charlotte the resources it needs, since the General Assembly is controlled by a clique of rural, Democrat legislators who have a cultural disconnect with Charlotte and other urban centers. She also said that the spreading influence of gangs has gotten their attention recently, and was hopeful that common ground can be reached.

IV. Closing

After a long and fruitful discussion, a motion was made to adjourn for the evening, and quickly seconded.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Love
Secretary

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