



Botetourt County, Virginia, Republican Committee (BCRC)

Committee Meeting Minutes

The July 15, 2024, meeting was held at VFW, Daleville, Virginia, and called to order at 6:33 p.m. by the Chairman.

Executive Committee present:

Chairman Steve Dean
Vice-Chairman Jim Ludington
Treasurer Chris Booth
Secretary Christine Liana
Legal Advisor Attorney Dirk Padgett
Precinct Coordinator Don Obenshain
Public Relations Director: Linda Rottman

Magisterial District Chairs:

Blue Ridge: Daryl Pugh
Buchanan: Brandy Campbell
Fincastle: Charles Ruhl
Valley: Tim Amos

Absent:

Magisterial District Chair, Amsterdam: Lisa Maydian
Parliamentarian Dr. David Bruce
Ways and Means Chairman: Danny Goad

AGENDA:

Opening prayer said by Don Obenshain.

Pledge of Allegiance led by the Chairman.

Republican Creed read by the Vice Chairman.

OLD BUSINESS:

Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer Chris Booth reported expenditures related to the Fourth of July event: signs, music, supplies; the BCRC website; dues and donations collected; currently \$13,651.78 on hand. There was no Motion to approve.

Secretary's Report:

Secretary Christine Liana read the minutes from the June 24, 2024, meeting.

Linda Rottman made a Motion to approve the meeting minutes; seconded; voted; Motion carried.

Fourth of July Event:

Don Obenshain reported on the results of a successful event at this [Daleville] VFW: had good turnout and good feedback; had food truck with Kenny burgers; had cotton candy and popcorn; children enjoyed the bouncy house and games; several [Trump] signs were sold; has more signs if anyone is interested.

NEW BUSINESS:**Status of Trump Caravan:**

Brandy Campbell reported on starting advertising on August 1; seeking free advertising on radio and social media with an event page; having the event put on the Sixth District Republican calendar; contacting other demographic groups and elected officials for Trump. Candace Poling will prepare the flyer with a QR code.

Cadillac plan: \$2,525.00: (17) 4'x8' signs with QR code for \$1300 or less; (100) 8"x11" fliers for \$25; (3) buses for \$1200 (\$400 each) and will ask other localities to share the cost, including a Navy Seals Team Six bus and Army bus; will ask other participating counties to share the cost; can also sell tickets for seats on the buses.

Regular plan: \$1,625.00: (10) signs for \$800 or less; 100 8"x11" fliers for \$25; (2) buses; checking with Whitey, owner of Trump Town in Boones Mill.

The Chairman reported: "One thing that the Sixth District Chairman has told us to do and that is to register as many people as we possibly can in our particular counties; and one of things that we're gonna do is we're gonna use all these events we're talking about here to register people to vote. Typically, if a person registers to vote especially if they do it within a couple of months of the election, they'll go ahead and vote; and we have very low turn out in Botetourt County; matter of fact, the last election there was only 1,723; we have almost 26,000 registered voters here, so we're doing a poor job of getting people out to vote; that's why we want to get people registered. The next thing is that we probably can recoup most of this money by selling seats on the bus."

Larry Ceola made motion for the \$2,525.00 budget; Charles Ruhl seconded. Tim Amos advised checking for the bus availability, and said the caravan will start at old Food Lion on Route 11 in Hollins; begins at 8:30 a.m., leave at 9:00 a.m. and ends in Buena Vista, to coincide with Congressman Ben Cline's rally. The Counties of Giles, Montgomery, Augusta, Shenandoah, etc. are participating. The Chairman reported: "I'm a member of the Western Virginia Freedom Caucus which involves most of the counties in the Sixth District, and they have a PAC which they use for candidate money, and they have a lot of money - in the millions, so the owner of the PAC or the head of the PAC told me that if we can get enough people involved in this, and I can prove it, they could possibly get a Trump rep to come in, so I think this is really important; we need to really work hard on getting this thing to grow as much as possible, and that's why we want these buses because if you tell people you've got these buses, I think we're gonna get deluged. Any more discussion?"

David Bandy asked, "We have \$13,600 basically. Have we looked at how we're gonna budget that and how that's going to be used for the rest of the year or are we going to have a ham dinner for fund raising? Just asking those monetary kind of questions."

The Chairman replied, "Yes, yes, yes. So, we're gonna try to recoup a lot of the money we're spending, and yes, we are going to have a quote "ham dinner; it's going to be better than a ham dinner; I've already got commitments from a lot of local politicians and from [Lt. Governor] Winsome Earle-Sears and also from [Congressman] Ben Cline; so yes, we're gonna have one, and it's gonna, like I said, be better than a ham dinner." No other information was provided regarding the date or venue.

The Chairman restated the Motion for the "Cadillac" version for the caravan budget; seconded; voted; Motion carried.

Status of Botetourt County - BCRC Memo of Understanding (MOU) concerning the County's Library Foundation:
Preface: The national problem of public libraries buying and loaning sexually explicit and perverse books directed toward children and teens with taxpayers' money exists in Botetourt County libraries.

Charles Ruhl reported: "The document for the Memorandum of Understanding for the library foundation is in the hands of the Supervisors and per Walt Michael, they are taking it seriously. For those who are unaware of the background, the Library Board of Trustees would like to form a library foundation which on the surface sounds good because then you could get donations and get some relief from using taxpayer money; the concern is that once the library foundation is formed, they're autonomous so we would have no control, the County would have no ability to restrict whatever they buy whatever they do; so the MOU, we were approached by the County to help create that and so what we attempted to do was put some restrictions so that expenditures from donations could only be for capital projects, building maintenance, that type of thing versus buying who knows whatever kind of books, videos, that sort of thing. Again, it's in the Supervisors' hands and Walt did say that they are taking it seriously; we don't have a timeline or any other information thus far." Terri Brockly asked, "since this group [BCRC] voted on doing that and we didn't know what the letter [MOU] said, can you read to us what the letter said that you brought to the Board of Supervisors since we voted on it?" Ruhl replied, "I don't have it with me but," The Chairman said, "We will post it to the [BCRC] website." Carl Porter asked "How does the MOU which is not a legal contract hold [Library Director] Julie Phillips and the Library Board accountable to what the County has agreed to, especially in two or three years, whenever it gets done, they can go back to doing whatever they want to do, so how are they held accountable by the County?" Ruhl replied, "That's a good point. At this point, the fact that they may agree to things and then if they go back on it, the optics are not good obviously at that point." Porter asked, "When do they care what the optics look like? When has [Library Director] Julie Phillips and the Library Board ever done anything halfway to meet us? That's my concern." Another BCRC member asked, "In this agreement ... can't they build a removal if they don't do what they're supposed to, then it's abolished?" Ruhl replied, "Yes, that is in the document." Porter asked, "But it's non-binding, right? It's just our [BCRC] suggestion of what we're asking them to do." Ruhl stated: "Right, but the key at this point is the whole project won't move forward until the Board of Supervisors votes to approve it to move forward and that's where we're hoping that the Board of Supervisors, based on information that Walt [Michael] has, will seriously considering putting restrictions to even allow it to move forward." Porter stated his concern, "I just worry about two or three years we're trying to be agreeable, and I haven't seen from the other side." Ruhl replied, "Right, it's a tool at this point; *I don't disagree with being skeptical.*" Brockly asked, "I just have some concerns in the fact that we - apparently this County has been fighting for the libraries and all that for the last two years, and now all of a sudden, why are we drafting a letter and what does the letter say about all of this to the Board of Supervisors? None of us know, so what is it that you're even talking about?" Ruhl replied, "I said that we are looking to restrict what they would spend money on, for example; so we'll get the document to you." Brockly replied, "I think that we should maybe take it away, pull it back, it's non-binding, so pull it back until we know what it is." The Chairman stated, "This Committee already voted to move forward with it." The Secretary said, "But they didn't know the whole gist of what was behind it." The Chairman stated, "It doesn't matter, the Committee voted to move forward. We're moving forward with it." Ruhl stated, "The key point is that Walt Michael has confidential information that he can't disclose." Members asked: "Why?" The Secretary said, "Why not? If the Committee voted on it, shouldn't the Committee know what you're voting on?" The Chairman stated, "We're not going to have this. The Committee voted on this; it's a done deal." Ruhl stated: "It was in a closed meeting, so it's not public knowledge; it's confidential." Members and the Secretary asked, "What about transparency?" Rhonda Wood said "I was at that closed meeting; you know, pretty soon I'm going to walk away from all this – because we, Christine and I and Jim Ludington [BCRC Vice-Chairman, non-BRACE member] and Cindy Bandy and them were called into that closed meeting." Ruhl replied, "No, I'm referring to the County Board of Supervisors closed business." Wood said, "No, Walt is with the Board of Supervisors now, they called us in; tell them what they

said.” The Chairman stated, “Look, when the Committee voted on it, *we told you guys we were going to draft it.* The Committee voted on it; we had a quorum to do it. It’s a done deal. It’s been presented. No matter what you guys say about it, it’s been presented; we’re not pulling it back. Now, to your question, there’s an election coming up, the fact is, we’ve got the Supervisors’ attention. If we continue to work together as a committee and not fight each other on this, we can make some headway with the Board.”

Brockly restated, “It’s non-binding.” The Chairman replied, “It doesn’t matter whether it’s non-binding. If they agree to do this for a certain period of time, we’ve got elections coming up. That makes a difference.”

Carol Witt-Pugh asked, “Steve, if I may, Chairman, what I think most people are upset about is when you say, ‘The Committee voted on it’ ...” The Chairman interrupted and said, “The Committee voted on it, we told you, wait a minute Carol,” Witt-Pugh requested, “Let me finish,” The Chairman said, “The Committee voted on it, *we told we were going to draft it*, we told that .. to ... *trust us in the drafting of it*. Now, let me tell you, *the actual MOU does not come from this Committee. What this Committee did was facilitate it with the Board of Supervisors.* The actual draft came from the other group, but we said ...”

Members asked, “What other group?” The Chairman replied, “B.R.A.C.E. or what was left of it. Look, it has nothing to do with removing books. You guys just calm down. All this Committee did was we said we’d facilitate this to the Board of Supervisors through Walt. Believe me, I would not have let it go if I didn’t think it was relevant and purposeful; none of us would have. I think it does the job short-term. I understand all this three-year, four-year business, but we have a committee here which is gonna influence elections, and that’s what we’re here to do. We’re here to get the right people in the right places, and we do have their attention, so if we have their attention, we’re going to have their attention a year from now, or two years from now.”

Wood said, “But you have to be transparent. I came into this party because I thought it was a group of people that were going to be transparent.” The Chairman stated, “We have been transparent.”

Wood said, “Do you want me to say what was told to us in the meeting?” The Chairman said, “We have been transparent.” Wood replied, “They told us, it’s a “whale and shark coming to the County.” What’s the whale? What’s the shark? It’s money. So they don’t want the books moved; they want the books put up a little higher.” The Chairman stated, “So right now, and we’re not going to get in a big discussion. Right now, the books are available to the kids. What we have accomplished is getting them out of the way. Come to order!”

Board of Supervisors’ Recall Discussion:

The Chairman stated, “This is being handled by an outside group, the Committee has nothing to do with this; the Executive Board quashed it. It’s over.”

By-Laws:

The By-Laws Review Committee consists of Rottman, Danny Goad, Walt Michael, the Secretary, Dirk Padgett, and former member Keri Martell. Two previous meetings were held, last on July 10, 2024, attended by Rottman, Goad, Michael, the Secretary, and Padgett.

Linda Rottman reported, “We’re working to reform the by-laws; we have an abundance of ideas and we have a little bit of a short-coming of man-power on this.” Updates mentioned include: preparing a model Call, rules for a Credential Committee for vetting new members, an outline of correct procedures for meetings, and removal procedure for those not following the Republican Creed. The Treasurer raised the topic of criteria of adhering to the Republican Creed.

Voter Registration Drives:

A member reported that according to Voter Registrar Traci Clark, there are 27,000 registered voters in Botetourt County. The Chairman stated that the Freedom Caucus that he belongs to will have a combined effort to have as many people turn out to vote in 6th, 7th, and 9th Districts. Mark Tyson said the registration numbers are incorrect,

and voter records were not “cleaned up” as acknowledged by the Board of Elections. Ideas were floated for other registration drives.

New Business:

Bill Van Velzer said a working group was formed to work with the Board of Supervisors concerning the County budget; drafting a proposal to recommend changes to next year’s budget. Chairman said Van Velzer was voted as committee chairman and asked for volunteer members with financial experience to help.

Announcements:

Larry Ceola told of a vision he had and encouraged the BCRC to “get behind our chairman” and help the goals.

The Chairman announced a church book for sale for \$20.00.

Linda Rottman made a Motion for new member Daniel Baker, who signed up at the 4th of July event; seconded, voted; Motion carried.

Mark Tyson restated that voter rolls need to be cleaned up. A member who works at the Voter Registrar office suggested that Registrar be invited to the BCRC meeting.

The Secretary announced that qualified candidates are needed for Board of Supervisors’ 2025 election for Amsterdam and Buchanan seats, and asked for those interested to begin planning now to prepare for the process.

Adjournment:

The Chairman moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 p.m.; Motion seconded; voted; Motion carried.

Meeting Minutes submitted to Chairman by BCRC Secretary on August 1, 2024.

According to sign-in sheets, 67 members and three visitors attended.