

# **LNC Executive Committee Meeting**

## **Teleconference November 9, 2000**

Present: Jim Lark, Chair  
Dan Fylstra, Vice-Chair  
Mark Tuniewicz, Treasurer  
Steve Givot, Secretary  
Ken Bisson (IN), At Large Representative  
Joe Dehn (CA), Region 2 Representative

Also present: Mark Nelson (IA), Region 1 Alternate (joined the meeting during discussion of the proposed FEC litigation)  
Dan Wisnosky (NV), Region 2 Alternate

Staff: Steve Dasbach, National Director

Lark called the meeting to order at 8:37 PM EST.

### **Item: Setting of Agenda**

Lark said that additional agenda items have been requested relating to advertising, direct mail, strategic planning, and a resolution recognizing a member.

Dehn agreed that the first two topics could be covered under the National Director's report.

The agenda was approved with the addition of strategic planning and the resolution recognizing a member.

### **Item: Chair's Comments**

Lark thanked others for their hard work leading up to the election. He said that several made "valiant efforts" and that he appreciated these efforts. He said that he was disappointed with some of the election results, but that he nonetheless appreciated the efforts made.

### **Item: Resolution Recognizing LP Member James Merritt**

Tuniewicz moved adoption of the following resolution:

WHEREAS the Libertarian Party is the 3rd largest political party in the United States, and

WHEREAS the Party regularly seeks to recognize those activists who have made a substantial and continuing contribution to the success of the Party, and

WHEREAS Party Member James Merritt of Santa Cruz, CA has been a Libertarian Party member since 1989, and has hosted the Libertarian Party forum on America Online at Keyword: LIBERTARIAN PARTY since 1993;

WHEREAS the Libertarian Party Forum on AOL represents a valuable resource to over 20 million users of that service, and has grown in size, activity, and influence over the last seven years; and

WHEREAS Mr. Merritt has recently concluded his service as the Libertarian Party Forum Host on AOL after having served in that role with distinction for 7 years;

RESOLVED, THEREFORE that the Libertarian National Committee, through its Executive Committee, expresses its thanks to James Merritt for his outstanding service to the Libertarian Party, and bestows an honorary Life Membership upon him as a small token of appreciation on behalf of Party members across the US.

Resolved this 9th day of November, 2000.

Bisson seconded.

Tuniewicz spoke in favor of the motion, identifying the details of Merritt's contributions.

Dasbach said that adoption of this resolution would set a new precedent because historically it has been the LNC which always approved such matters.

Givot said that he believes the Executive Committee has the authority to approve this, but that he does not believe it should do so because of past precedents.

Dehn moved to amend by deleting the words: "and bestows an honorary Life Membership upon him as a small token of appreciation on behalf of Party members across the US."

Givot seconded.

Dehn said that Lark is considering development of a formal program to recognize those who have made extraordinary contributions to the LP, and that perhaps this individual should be among those considered as part of such a program.

Lark said that he would like to see the party determine what, if any, award or reward the party could give to individuals who have given extraordinary service to the party. He said that he would prefer to refrain from rewarding any individuals until the party has a chance to consider the question in general.

Givot agreed with Lark.

Tuniewicz suggested that the words which the amendment would delete instead be changed to: "and recommends to the Libertarian National Committee that they recognize the unique contribution of James Merritt."

Dehn and Givot withdrew their amendment and seconded Tuniewicz's suggestion.

Tuniewicz's amendment passed without objection.

The amended resolution passed by a vote of 6 to 0.

## **Item: Proposed FEC Litigation**

Dasbach said that he had received a letter dealing with the LNC's liability for funding the proposed FEC lawsuit, but that the letter was unacceptable. He said that, subsequently, a decision was made to delay filing the lawsuit, so that nothing further has been done.

Dehn asked what was unacceptable about the letter.

Dasbach said that the letter referred to the LP's "good faith efforts to fundraise" in support of the lawsuit, which was not within the guidelines set by the Executive Committee.

Lark said that we are in a holding pattern on this issue.

Tuniewicz said that he recently received email which indicated that Browne was on C-SPAN recently promoting a new effort to educate people about libertarianism through a new foundation.

Dasbach said that this effort is unrelated to the organization which is considering filing the FEC litigation. He said the organization relating to the lawsuit has been in

existence for a number of years and is different from the new foundation that Browne is pursuing.

Bisson said that, given that we have no acceptable letter in hand regarding financial liability related to the lawsuit, that there is no reason for the EC to take any action before the December LNC meeting.

Dehn asked whether Perry Willis is aware that the LP considers the matter to be "on hold."

Dasbach replied that Willis was aware that the letter was unsatisfactory but did not necessarily know that we might consider it on hold for other reasons.

Dehn said that we should state this formally.

Dehn moved that the prior Executive Committee authorization to join this litigation is reversed and the issue be placed on the agenda for the December LNC meeting.

Givot seconded.

Dehn said that the situation now is different from what it was when the Executive Committee originally acted to approve LP participation. He said there is no longer the same urgency to act. He said that the question of Harry Browne's standing requires a re-evaluation of the viability of the suit. He said that there is now doubt about the financial commitment of the other participants which might affect what would be expected from the LP. He said that the relationship between the LP and Harry Browne is also now different from what it was during the campaign.

Tuniewicz moved to amend the motion to read: "that the prior Executive Committee authorization to join this litigation is reversed and the issue deferred until the next Executive Committee meeting."

Tuniewicz's motion died for lack of a second.

The motion passed by a vote of 4 to 1.

## **Item: National Director's Report**

Dasbach reviewed his financial report. He said that he had achieved his previously-stated target of \$50,000 in net current assets immediately after the election.

Dasbach said that other than some follow through on direct mail already sent, he does not plan additional direct mail this year with the possible exception of a follow-up mailing to inquiries which have come in since the national convention. He said that this will help achieve the year end goal of \$150,000 in net current assets.

Dehn asked for clarification on the inquiry follow-up and asked about the possibility of also mailing to people who had recently registered Libertarian.

Dasbach said that in the absence of the financial core goal he would do more mailings but he didn't want to risk missing that goal.

Dehn said that membership growth is also a core goal.

Bisson said that his impression of the election results is that from the level of governor down, the Libertarian Party is gaining support. He said that he believes that there were special circumstances in the presidential election which affected the outcome, but those circumstances did not seem to affect lower level races.

Dasbach said that LP candidates received more than 1.6 million votes for the U S House. He said that this is the first time in US history that any political party other than the Democrats or Republicans had received more than one million votes for the US House. He said that our candidates for the US Senate received about one million additional votes.

Givot asked Dasbach to prepare an analysis of the number of votes per LP candidate for US House and US Senate by election year. He said that such an analysis would be helpful in evaluating the benefits of working to run many candidates for Congress.

Lark reviewed some of the very positive results of LPVA's strategic plan.

Dasbach reviewed which states showed an increase in votes for the LP presidential candidate and which states showed a decrease. He said that much of the vote loss occurred in the larger states in which the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates were in a very close race.

Givot asked Dasbach to attempt to prepare an analysis relating campaign spending to votes received for LP US House and US Senate candidates. He offered to help in analyzing the data if Dasbach could collect it.

Dasbach said that it will be very difficult to get this data from many of the campaigns, but that he intends to try to do so.

Givot said that he felt that campaigns with raised or spent less than \$5,000 could probably be lumped together in one category for this purpose. He said that this would enable use of FEC data instead of waiting for the campaigns to provide the data directly to Dasbach.

Fylstra asked whether Dasbach had any information about how other third parties fared in the election and how they are reacting to the election results.

Dasbach said that LP candidates did better than any other third party in US House races.

Dehn asked what telemarketing has been done recently and mentioned a report that calls were made as late as Sunday, November 5 asking for money to buy TV ads.

Dasbach said that it was supposed to end on Friday, November 3. He said that the last ad purchase was made on Thursday, November 2 and that the telemarketing contractors were supposed to say that the ads have been purchased and that they were now calling to complete raising the money to fund them.

Dasbach reviewed the final advertising purchases. He said that total advertising for the year had a gross cost of just over \$285,000 - with a net cost of about \$271,000. Of that amount \$43,000 was candidate ad matching funds and \$20,000 was Internet banner advertising,

## **Item: Political Director's Report**

Dasbach discussed this topic due to Crickenberger's absence.

Dasbach said that while the LNC may want to keep 50 state ballot access as a goal, 50 state ballot access at any cost is something that the LNC may wish to reconsider. He suggested that it might be appropriate to establish some standards for the level of local commitment to support ballot access before the LNC provides assistance to affiliates in obtaining ballot access.

## **Item: Preparation for December LNC Meeting**

Dasbach reviewed the plans for the December LNC meeting.

Lark reviewed some of the matters to be on the agenda including appointment of a general counsel, other appointments, strategic planning, the 2002 convention, regional representative reports, staff reports, and review and approval of the 2001 budget.

Bisson suggested that there could also be a report from the Browne campaign.

Tuniewicz asked whether Dasbach expected the Browne campaign to issue a detailed written report similar to the one done for 1996.

Dasbach said that he does not expect them to issue a report with that much detail.

## **Item: Strategic Planning**

Givot introduced the topic by reminding the Executive Committee members of their previous sense that strategic planning should be discussed by email prior to the December LNC meeting to work toward developing consensus on how to proceed. He said that there had been virtually no email discussion of strategic planning since the Executive Committee took this direction. He expressed his concern about the lack of progress and the short amount of time remaining before the December LNC meeting.

Givot said that he feels that it is unrealistic to expect the LNC to walk into the December meeting with a blank sheet of paper and walk out with a well-developed plan for how it wishes to do strategic planning.

Givot referred to a memo he had sent to all LNC members and alternates which presented seven key questions about the strategic planning process. He asked the Executive Committee members to briefly discuss their responses to these questions in an attempt to determine the degree of consensus on each of these. He said that by assessing what consensus already exists among the Executive Committee members, it may be possible to spend the remaining time before the December LNC meeting focusing on those areas where there is the greatest diversity of opinion as to how to proceed.

The Committee agreed to review the questions posed by Givot.

Givot said that the first two questions were closely related.

- 1) Who will participate? LNC members? Staff? Other LP members?
- 2) What is the appropriate role of each of these participants?

Lark said that he has a "strong bias" toward limiting the strategic planning group to LNC members and alternates. He said that he believes that staff should be viewed as a resource and source of information. He said that we may also wish to invite non-LNC members to provide input to the strategic planning group.

Givot expressed agreement with Lark. He said that Dasbach and he had discussed bringing state chairs into the process for two specific, limited purposes: brainstorming during the initial stage of the process to develop a broader spectrum of alternative to evaluate and input on as to which part of LP (national, state, or local) is the most appropriate level to pursue each targeted strategy or tactic.

Dehn expressed general agreement with Lark and Givot and added that for these kinds of purposes input might be sought from other activists beyond just state chairs.

Dasbach expressed concern that failing to include staff as equal participants would create a "separate but equal" situation.

Givot said that it is very important to the process that all participants attend all meetings. He said that when people miss meetings, an intense process such as this is disrupted.

Lark asked Givot how he would handle medical emergencies and other such situations.

Givot suggested that there would likely be some need to make exceptions. He suggested that Lark should review any such case and make a determination as to whether any instance of missing a meeting would preclude the absent person from further participation in the group.

Lark agreed to do so.

There was consensus among the Committee that this was a reasonable way to proceed.

- 3) What is the objective of their work? A one year plan? A two year plan? A four year plan? Some combination?

Dasbach suggested that rather than rushing to adopt a new plan to implement for most or all of 2001, it would be best to develop one plan that covers the time from its adoption until the end of 2004 and a plan within that plan which covers the time from its adoption until the end of 2002. Given the expectation that these plans would be presented for consideration sometime in mid-2001, this would leave the second part of 2001 as a period to transition from what we were already doing to the new plans.

Givot said that he generally agrees with Dasbach. He said that these could be referred to as a three-year plan - covering through 2004 - and a one-year plan - covering through 2002 - although it was his expectation that they would begin implementation mid-2001 and that the plans would cover more time than just three or one years.

Dehn suggested that to avoid confusion that might arise from differing ideas about when the plans are considered to begin, it would be better to refer to these plans according to their target year (e.g., "the 2002 plan") rather than by their length.

There was consensus among the Committee that this was a reasonable way to proceed.

- 4) When and how will they meet? How often? By phone? In person? Where?

Givot expressed his belief that effectiveness would require meeting in person. He said that his proposal is that the group plan to meet twice before the Spring 2001 LNC meeting, report to that meeting to assure that full LNC input is received on the direction the strategic planning group is going, then meeting twice more before presenting a final proposal to the Summer 2001 LNC meeting.

Dasbach suggested that rather than move those LNC meetings to March and June, as Givot had previously suggested, that it would be better to keep the typical April and August meeting dates, affording the strategic planning group additional time to prepare written reports for the LNC.

Dehn expressed agreement with this suggestion.

Givot said that he also supports Dasbach's suggestion. He said that it would allow time for additional meetings, if needed, without delaying the schedule for LNC consideration of the final proposal.

Lark suggested that we should set aside dates for 6 meeting - three before the Spring 2001 LNC meeting and three before the Summer 2001 LNC meeting - so that all participants would hold those dates available if needed.

Givot said that would be very helpful.

There was consensus among the Committee that this was a reasonable way to proceed.

- 5) Who will lead, facilitate, or oversee the process? What skills are required for the person doing so? What experience is required for the person doing so?

Givot said that he preferred not to discuss who would lead the process at this time. He said it is important to assess what skills and experience are required. He said that there are at least two LNC members who have some experience in leading this sort of process.

Lark said that he does not wish to lead the group.

Givot said that what is needed is a facilitator rather than a chair. He said that if the process runs well, it will be one of consensus building rather than one of motions and voting.

- 6) What is the scope of the work to be done? Is the mission statement open for reconsideration? What level of detail is desired in the final plan?

Givot said that this is of vital importance. He said that we must leave the December LNC meeting with a written document directing the work of the strategic planning group. He said that failing to provide such a document will set the process up for failure. He cited the experience - earlier this year - of the LP Program Committee.

Givot said that the document should describe - at a minimum -- the scope of work that the LNC expects to be performed, any limitations or restrictions that the strategic planning group must respect, the nature of reports and communications that the LNC expects during the process, and exactly what level of detail the LNC expects in the final report and recommendation.

- 7) What needs to be budgeted to fund this process? If the meetings are several and in person, who will cover the costs of travel, phone calls, etc.?

Givot said that the LNC should do all it can to promote broad participation in the planning process. He said that he believes that financial barriers to participation should be minimized. He said that it will cost participants about \$500 per weekend in transportation and lodging cost.

Tuniewicz said that he believes that the LNC should cover only air transportation costs.

Givot said that he believes that the LNC should reimburse participants for airfare and hotel costs only.

Lark said that LNC members are volunteers. He said that he is "somewhat queasy" about LNC reimbursing these travel costs. He said that he recognizes the tradeoff between reimbursing these costs and broader participation.

Givot raised an additional question which results from moving the target strategic plan approval date to August, 2001. He asked the Committee what should be done in the adoption of goals and budget for 2001 to recognize that in August 2001 the LNC plans to adopt what may be a new and different strategic direction.

Dasbach said that in the developing the 2001 goals and budget, we should emphasize things that we are highly likely to continue to do and highly unlikely to reverse in the new strategic plan, while providing the strongest foundation for whatever plan is developed.

Givot presented some hypothetical questions which he said were intended to stimulate thought. What about targeting holding membership levels even rather than pursuing growth until the plan is adopted? What about using the first half of 2001 to experiment in several areas - i.e., campus organizing, sending national staff to support local races - to get data about alternative strategies as an input to strategic planning?

Dasbach said that this period is probably not the time to proceed helter-skelter in new directions.

There was consensus that the Executive Committee would discuss what, if anything, should be done differently in the first half of 2001 and related topics at its next meeting.

## **Item: Remarks for the Good of the Party**

Tuniewicz expressed gratitude to the staff for their efforts over the past several hectic months.

Lark reported that the Tuesday morning (election day) issue of the largest newspaper in central VA featured a story about the national chair of the LP - a "high water mark" for LP coverage in VA.

Dasbach said that - regarding the ballot in Florida that is under question - Richard Rider sent out an example of that ballot mocking the challenge to that ballot.

Tuniewicz reported that he was sworn into public office for the second time this evening. He said that the governor of MA had appointed him to a state commission on cultural and economic relations with French-speaking Canada.

## **Item: Meeting Schedule**

The Committee agreed that its next meeting would take place at 6:30 PM EST on November 28, 2000.

Fylstra moved to adjourn.

The Committee adjourned at 10:55 PM EST.