

Final BHNA General Meeting Minutes
October 22, 2014, 7:30pm
Beresford Rec. Center

Speakers: Kevin Mullin, State Assembly Member, 22nd District

Topic: Legislative Update and Q/A

Number of Attendees: 18 current BHNA members, 3 non-members, 21 total attendees
Board Members in Attendance: Lisa Taner, Jan Prisco, Kaye Sharma, Ellen Wang, Heinz Plischke, Monika Lee and Susan Rowinski.

The meeting was hosted by Susan Rowinski. Susan opened the meeting with a summary of upcoming BHNA events, the role that BHNA plays, and the need for additional board members, discussing the responsibilities of board members. Susan also briefly discussed the upcoming election and voting options and associated voting guides. Susan then introduced Kevin.

Kevin lauded the BHNA for its role in the community.

Kevin stated that currently there are 42 “freshmen” or first-term representatives in the State Assembly due to a bumper crop of new members elected in 2012 and because of redistricting. The current, newly revised term limit laws allow 12 years of service rather than the previous limit of six years of service. Kevin believes that in the current State Assembly a civil and cooperative tone exists between Democrats and Republicans as more middle of the road candidates are being elected. He is seeing bipartisan support on various pieces of legislation.

Even with the progress being shown, we have NOT yet fixed the volatility of budget and taxes. California’s government has become very dependent upon the wealthy income earners for tax revenues, causing volatility. The Rainy Day Fund (Prop 2) should help to ride out future recessions, and Kevin expressed strong support for it. A more fundamental fix to our tax structure is still required.

Kevin has had 16 bills signed into law, the most important being the Vote By Mail pilot. This is expected to increase the percentage of voters participating in elections and will save Californians money. He is currently spending time educating City Councils in the County of San Mateo so that they will approve Vote by Mail in the near future. Over 70% of San Mateo County residents are already voting by mail.

Kevin holds the role of Assistant Speaker Pro Temp, the #3 post of the Assembly. San Mateo County is a large economic generator for the State of California. There is much wealth in San Mateo County, but there is no affordable housing strategy or initiative, which is a concern.

Kevin expressed a hope that we can rebuild trust in the State Legislature and find a way to do so whether it be via campaign reform, more open information exchange, or other approaches. The public interest needs to be placed first going forward by all legislators in order to reach that goal.

We then transitioned into the question and answer section of the meeting:

Q: What words of wisdom did your father (who was in public service) give you?

A: His dad was a government teacher who had his students go to local government meetings. He wanted his children to see government in action.

Q: Is the greater civility in the Legislature due to the number of Freshmen?

A: Yes. Previously the average term was 3 years. Now the length of service is longer, and the freshmen feel a burden to demonstrate bipartisan civility. The Water Bond is one example of bipartisan bills and cooperation.

Q: How will San Mateo County benefit from the Water Bond?

A: It replaced a pork bond commitment with a bond containing little pork and is of general benefit to the State.

Q: Do you think we will soon see desalination plans?

A: One issue is expense, the other is environmental impact. We do need to figure out a way to create levies due to rising sea levels. Lots of issues in this area exist in San Mateo County. However, desalination is probably not in the near future.

Q: You said Prop 2 (Rainy Day Fund) is a band-aid for tax/revenue management. What is the bigger answer?

A: Nobody will touch Prop 13's residential component. The Corporate loophole in Prop 13 is up for evaluation and change in order to increase revenues. Sales tax on services is another possibility. San Mateo County is 38th or 39th in the per person spending in California.

Q: How will the Rainy Day Fund be protected against misuse?

A: There are scenarios in which the reserve can be tapped in severe emergencies. We are looking at \$7 to \$8 billion dollars to be used to smooth out the next recession.

Q: Prop 45 includes approval of insurance rates for some individuals. Do we need an Insurance Commissioner to regulate rate increases?

A: He is of the feeling that we need to let Affordable Care Act work instead. He is troubled by some of the provisions of Prop 45.

Q: Is a gasoline tax increase imminent?

A: From a climate change perspective, we need to stay the course and bring gas price increases into the mix of efforts. Fewer dollars are being derived from gas taxes due to hybrids, electric cars, etc., which means not enough money is now available for

transportation infrastructure. Fuel efficient cars are creating the need to find another way to tax drivers (miles driven?). There will probably be a gas tax increase after the beginning of the year.

Q: Do you have any thoughts on quality of life with the upcoming high density building plans?

A: Kevin supports use of transit oriented development. We have issues of too little Caltrans capacity and we also have issues where people don't want to give up driving their cars. We need to encourage the use of public transportation, but we currently have inadequate east/west transit systems for seniors/aging population. Incentivizing smart growth through transit dollars is Kevin's preferred approach.

Kevin then talked a bit about the community outreach program that he does.

Q: What is the difference between signature initiatives on the ballot and legislative initiatives?

A: Legislative solutions are always preferred since that is the legislature's job. But another avenue for action is needed for citizens when things get bottled up by the legislature.

Q: What are your thoughts on Prop H?

A: He supports the initiative. The community colleges play a vital role in retraining for all ages.

A concern was brought up about pedestrian safety and traffic congestion during school start and endings. "Safe Route to Schools" Federal grant money is available, but it is not a cure-all to the issue. How do we reduce trips and enable pedestrian access to schools, while increasing safety is the problem to be solved.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:37.

Meeting minutes submitted by Jan Prisco, Secretary.