



MINUTES FOR OCTOBER 2, 2007

After the signing-in, members and guests socialized and partook of coffee, tea and goodies before being called to order by President Joni Eisen at 7:15 pm.

President Eisen welcomed everyone, presented the evening's agenda and minutes from the meeting of September 4th. Both were approved, so the focus went next to the treasurer's report.

The previous incarnation of the Potrero Hill Democratic Club died of discouragement in 2000, leaving behind \$534 in its treasury, which was recently recovered and added to the coffers of the new club, bringing our total bank balance to \$877. From this amount will be taken a \$25 table fee for the 17th Annual Potrero Hill Festival on October 13th, \$234 to cover the cost of two ads in *The View* listing the club's November local election endorsements (October and November issues), as well as the cost of a new batch of club t-shirts.

Rebecca Shearin, heading up the Political Action Committee, listed the upcoming opportunities to help with voter registration and passed around sign-up sheets, encouraging anyone able to participate to take a shift (1 to 1.5 hours). Because of California's early primary, there will be on-going chances to volunteer for this fun and interesting community service.

There is a San Francisco law requiring club treasurers to attend training sessions. Information on this and other pertinent SF laws may be obtained by contacting The SF Ethics Commission:

25 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 220, S.F., CA 94102
Phone: 415-252-3100; Fax: 415-252-3112
Email: ethicscommission@sfgov.org
Website: www.sfgov.org/ethics

As we have new club members joining late in the calendar year, membership was next on the agenda. Tracking individual renew dates is labor-intensive, so it was put to the vote that beginning 1/1/08, membership will be \$25 for the whole calendar year and \$15 if one joins between June and December. The motion passed. The rule that a member's dues must have been paid 60 days before in order to vote on endorsements (according to club Bylaws) still stands.

President Eisen next introduced our honored guest speaker, Kamala Harris. Ms. Harris is a career prosecutor with an impressive background, from her Berkeley childhood through her tenure as San Francisco's first female District Attorney (elected in 2003). She told us her civil rights activist parents raised her to be socially conscious from an early age. She graduated from Howard University (Most Distinguished Alumna) and got her law degree from Hastings College of Law. Her first job in law enforcement was as Deputy DA in Alameda County, a post she held for 8 years. In that capacity she worked closely with Ron Dellums and expressed gratitude for his wise mentorship.

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Harris told us in no uncertain terms that she loves her job, which includes fighting diverse areas of social injustice, from senior abuse to gun violence. She has intensely focused on fighting violent crime and wants to bring about reforms that would make San Francisco an innovative model for DA offices around the country.

Throughout her career she has fought for youth and children, spearheading the foundation of SF's first Safe House for sexually exploited youth, plus she sponsored statewide legislation that toughens punishment of child sex predators. Harris considers our present criminal justice system a defective failure, and in her concern for youthful offenders she's introduced the "Back on Track" program for 18- to 24-year-olds that supports them in finding jobs, housing, community connection, and promotes health and fitness as well as education on money management and parenting skills. So far the statistics show participants down from 50% to less than 10% recidivism.

Because of her stance on capital punishment, Harris has been labeled "soft" on hard-core criminals, but she believes that rather than "soft" or "tough" crime-fighting, the focus should be on "smart" measures to prevent crime and create safe communities.

In the Q&A portion of the meeting, Harris fielded topics including

- *cameras as crime detection tools* (regarding debate around public safety v. civil rights: "we should have both!")
- *relationship between police and DA's office* ("good on a daily basis, but there's room for improvement")
- *the "stop snitching" phenomenon* ("inability to prove cases creates public unsafety")
- *relationship between police and communities* (bonus incentives for cops to live in the communities they patrol)
- *truancy* (in analysis of homicides under age 25, 90% are high school drop-outs; a child not going to school is at risk of drug involvement and street trouble; truancy is a crime and she'll prosecute – she doesn't want to punish unsupported kids, but she has to make it an issue)

She graciously ended her portion of the program by thanking us for our long-standing activism.

President Eisen brought the discussion back to club business, asking for suggestions or ideas for a future fundraiser, perhaps benefiting The Neighborhood House. Since the February primary puts focus on more immediate election activism, the fundraiser will be tabled for the time being. A suggestion to have a party to celebrate the club's first anniversary was denounced by a non-member who considered it frivolous. Discussion ensued: "Is fun permissible in serious politics?"

Meeting was adjourned.

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M. Kate Hilsenbeck
Secretary