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**GENERAL MEETING  
MINUTES  
November 15, 2023**

**GRAND  
DEMOCRATS**

**Call to Order:** Suzi Walling called the meeting to order and Bob Walling led the singing of our national anthem.

**President's Remarks:** Suzi Walling thanked the membership for the opportunity to serve as president. She welcomed members and guests.

Suzi also welcomed LD 29 Candidate Eric Stafford, CD8 Candidates Marc Lewis, May Placentia representing her mother Bernadette Greene Placentia, and Steven Sawdy. Aly Cline, Surprise District 2 Councilperson was also welcomed.

Suzi told meeting attendees that we will be electing Grand Democrats officers and directors for 2024. Unfortunately, we are still in need of a Vice President for this year who will stand for president in 2025. Suzi believes that without a vice-president we cannot build the strong leadership team to bolster democratic candidates going into campaign 2024 and beyond.

Suzi stated the 2023 board has strengthened club infrastructure in the form of new by-laws, a new logo, brochure and website. She continues to work on a new policy manual.

Suzi asked members to pay their 2024 dues either in person or on-line. Act Blue is working well on the website for membership renewals and donations. Suzi asked members what they will do to help Democrats in the coming year.

**Minutes of October 25, 2023 General Meeting:** Co-secretary Serene Matthews asked if there were any corrections or comments on the October 25, 2023 minutes. Hearing none, the minutes were approved by acclamation.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Jim Coffran reported a November 1, 2023 balance of \$5414.19. After income of \$943.26 from ActBlue and other contributions, and room and maintenance expenses of \$367.94, the club's November 15 balance is \$5999.51.

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**Election of Officers and Directors:** President Walling introduced the Slate of Officers and Directors as presented by the Grand Dems Board for 2024. They are President-Bob Walling, Vice President-Open, Secretary-Carol Parnell, Treasurer-Jim Coffran, Member-at-Large: Kevin Boivin, Member-at-Large: Ken Kessler and Member-at-Large: Barbara Nelson. Nominations were requested from the floor for each position. No nominations were offered and the Board candidates were elected by affirmation.

**Eric Stafford** – Candidate for LD29 Senate – Eric introduced himself to our audience as the LD29 Candidate running for Arizona State Senate. He outlined goals running as a Clean Elections Candidate and encouraged a LD29 registered voters to sign his nomination petition and donate \$5 for his Clean Election campaign goal. Two hundred \$5 gifts are needed.

**Francesca Martin - Co-Founder/Deputy Director of Keep AZ Blue-** Francesca is a student at Arizona State University majoring in Political Science. The Keep AZ Blue Student Coalition is a PAC she helped form with three other students after working on the Biden 2020 campaign. She told of her family's union history and how politics have impacted her life. One of their goals is to get young people to recognize their own "political" histories. Francesca said that It is not only presidential elections that impact the concerns of students and the 18-29 demographic. They need to be aware of all down ballot elections. The PAC goals are to expand the student electorate - not just to register, but to follow through with actual voting. They are also working with candidates to focus on issues for younger voters. Keep AZ Blue will use age appropriate canvassing and literature, social media and community events highlighting the 18-29 age group and their concerns. Candidates need to focus on the issues that this demographic feels is important. Younger voters vote for democrats by wide margins, they just need to vote in greater numbers. Francesca asked for donations to help then get VAN access for voter data.

**Claire Knipe – Political Director of Arizona List -** Claire is an Arizona native with a degree in Political Science and Gender and Women's Studies from the University of Arizona. She works with Arizona List because she is passionate about local elections and electing candidates who fight for reproductive rights. Over 300 qualified women have worked with, and received training from, Arizona List to run for elected offices of all kinds. They focus on pro-choice Democratic women who have been, and will be, critical in protecting reproductive rights just before and after the Dobbs decision.

Arizona List intent is to "build the bench" of qualified women elected officials. There are 128 Arizona List women who are currently serving in Arizona, including 50 school board members

Claire explained that Arizona For Abortion Access is a collective effort to safeguard and expand reproductive rights by constitutional amendment. The coalition of organizations involved include Planned Parenthood, ACLU of Arizona, NARAL, Affirm Sexual and Reproductive Health, and Healthcare Rising Arizona. Polling indicates 9 in 10 Arizona's support this amendment but the first task is collect more than 500,000 signatures to get the amendment on the ballot.

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## Committee Reports

*Community Outreach:* Kevin Boivin told members about ongoing food bank donations to Valley View Community Food Bank and Adopt-a-Street opportunities in Grand.

*Fundraising:* Ken Kessler thanked those who came to the wine fundraising event. He reported it was a fun event and raised about \$800. Meetings will continue to have 50-50 and wine snob raffles.

*Membership:* Carol Karsten reported we had 20 new renewals, three new members and 15 guests at the meeting. There are 231 members of the Grand Dems.

*Social:* Judy Shields reported that the November Blue Breakfast at Richi's Diner went very well so Blue Breakfasts there will continue when resumed in January. We will have a holiday dinner at Angela's on Dec 5, similar to a Blue Dinner but will be special with bling, treats and door prizes. Please make reservations on the website and let Judy know if your plans change.

*Program/Publicity:* Bob Walling - The January 24 general meeting will be in combination with Northwest Valley Democrats and an opportunity to hear from all five Democratic CD 8 candidates. In February there will be a forum for Arizona Corporation Commission candidates. Opportunities to hear from additional candidates will be a program focus.

**President-Elect Remarks:** Bob Walling said that one year ago there was question about whether the Grand Democrats club would continue after being in existence for 20 years. Suzi and Bob thought it was too important to fold.

However, November 20, 2024 will be the last General Meeting of 2024 and we need to have candidates who will carry it forth. We need a vice president not only for 2024 but who will go forward as president into 2025.

Bill Shields was invited up, presented with a Certificate of Appreciation, a Grand Dems cup and thanked for his service to the club as president, and past-president, over many years. Bill spoke about the mission and his hope for the future of the Grand Democrats.

Suzi Walling was invited up, presented with a Certificate of Appreciation, a Grand Dems cup and thanked for her service to the club as President for 2023. She remarked that it had been her honor to offer leadership to the Club and hoped that new leadership will step up for 2025 and beyond.

**Raffles:** The 50:50 and Wine Snob raffles were conducted by Ken Kessler. The 50-50 club donation amount was \$64.

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**Next Meeting** – January 24<sup>th</sup> at 5:45pm, in the Gila Room at Cimarron Center.

Submitted by,  
Serene Matthews  
Grand Dems Co-Secretary

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