



Clarence Democratic Committee



Fall 2023 Newsletter

You can vote TODAY

Vote for Town of Clarence's Democratic Team

Election Day: Tuesday November 7th

Early Voting: Oct. 28th - Nov. 5th



Mary G. Carney
for Family Court Judge



Shannon E. Filbert
for Family Court Judge



Mark Poloncarz
for Erie County Executive



Ronald S. Schubert
for Erie County Legislator



Katie Webster
for Councilmember

Visit ecdems.com for more information

If you have questions or need a ride to vote -
Call us at (716) 853-2511

Make a plan to vote!

Dear friend,

Welcome to the Clarence Democratic Committee's first newsletter. The past year has been a big one for the committee. We've continued to grow as an organization and have pushed for a better future in Clarence. Now we need your help to get a Democrat elected in Clarence and to keep right-wing extremism out of our County Government. Please make a plan to vote if you haven't done so. Join the conversation and spread the word.

Today marks the beginning of early voting. You can cast your ballot early from now until November 5 at any early voting location in the county. Polls are open from 9am-5pm on weekends and noon-9pm on weekdays. Your last chance to vote is on Election Day, November 7 from 6am-9pm.

- Alex Maccallini, Chair of the Clarence Democratic Committee

Katie's Corner

By Katie Webster, Town Board Candidate and Vice Chair of the Clarence Democratic Committee



My name is Katie Webster. I am a lifelong Clarence resident. I raised my family here and started my business here. I care deeply about our community, its people, its history and its future. That's why I am a Democrat and why I am running for Clarence Town Council.

Over-development

Growth in Clarence is inevitable, but it is rapidly getting out of hand. Over the past decade, I have watched our Town Board green-light changes in our community, promoting commercial and high-density development that encroaches on our historic neighborhoods and eats up farmland and green space. It also has a negative impact on our roads, schools, wildlife, and tax base.

Many people have chosen Clarence as their home for our excellent schools, lower taxes, and historical charm. Given rapid residential growth and questionable commercial development, it is doubtful that the qualities that made us want to stay here or move here are sustainable. We have already lost so much of the rural character that made Clarence special.

As a town, we need to reevaluate where our current Comprehensive Plan is leading us. It is time to address the zoning, land use, and the development proposal and approval process. More importantly, it is time for the concerns of residents to be heard and incorporated into a plan for smart growth. It is my goal to make the realities of this process accessible and transparent to all residents.

The residents of Clarence need positive change to combat over-development. We need representatives who will listen to the residents' concerns and answer their questions. I offer a fresh voice, reflecting the values and needs of our neighbors. I will promote smart growth that takes into consideration our residents, our roads, our schools, and our tax base.



Effective Representation

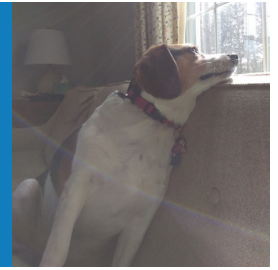
Our current governing body is not representative of our population or of the voting public. Women comprise 50% of both the total and voting populations in Clarence, yet they hold no position on the Town Board. Over 50% of registered voters in our town are not Republicans, yet our 5 Town Board seats are all held by Republicans. This needs to change.

Republican leadership has been unchecked in this town for over a decade. They need to be challenged to keep them connected with the town. The voices of all citizens and stakeholders need to be heard.

As a woman, as a mom, as a business owner, and as a lifelong Clarence resident, I will add new ideas, a fresh perspective, and enthusiasm to our Town Board. I will always seek your input, listen to concerns, and advocate for the issues most important to Clarence residents. Most importantly, I will encourage a cooperative decision-making process and work to ensure that all Clarence residents are represented on the Town Board.

With your support, we will thoughtfully and responsibly grow Clarence together.

Dreaming of a Dog Park



Where can a dog go to relax with friends in Clarence? Once a year, in the annual Bark in The Park, our furry friends can enjoy the Clarence Town Park on Main Street. For the rest of the year, Snoopy, Marmaduke, and their kind are banned from the town parks.

The Clarence Democratic Committee Members are taking an active role in finding a solution to enhance the experience of Clarence dog owners. Committee members have met with town officials to see what their reasoning is behind the ban, as well as conducting feasibility studies comparing the safety and financing of dog park projects locally.

Katie Webster, Democratic Committee vice chair and candidate for Clarence Town Board, attended this year's Park in the Park. She met with residents and local business owners to gauge attitudes on the town's current solution to dog recreation. She found that while there was no clear consensus on what should be done, people found common ground on the fact that the town is not doing enough to consider the experience of dog owners.

The only public spaces dogs can be in the town are on public rights of way (streets and sidewalks) and on the bike paths. This is a uniquely restrictive law in Erie County. Many other parks in other towns and villages allow vaccinated dogs if leashed. Clarence simply prohibits dogs, except for the Bark In The Park once a year.

"Dog parks are extremely popular and provide a convenient venue for dog owners to spend time with their pets outdoors without having to worry about disturbing others," said Erie County Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Forestry Troy P. Schinzel, during a dedication ceremony for the Como Lake Bark Park in 2021.

Como Lake Bark Park is approximately 11 miles from Clarence Center. The popular Ellicott Creek Bark Park is about 10 miles away. Those are not convenient locations for Clarence residents or their four-legged family members.

"Nay-sayers often cite liability and cost, but dog parks can be developed by nonprofit organizations established specifically for this purpose." Said Katie Webster, "These nonprofits address funding, planning and development and coordinate with the town government to secure land and resources for the project. A dog park would also help ensure more green space is protected from development. I will encourage the Town Board to work with dog owners to make this dream a reality."

Waste Not



The Clarence Democratic Committee has been a loud voice in pushing the town to revisit the municipal waste collection situation. Unlike most comparable communities in Western New York, Clarence residents are responsible for contracting their own garbage service. With no central coordination of pickup schedules, we see multiple trucks (regular and recyclables) on multiple days of the week.

Not only is the cost of private pickup escalating on an almost quarterly basis, but multiple heavy trucks stress our already fragile roads, our environment, and the flow of traffic. Prices for customers vary from household to household. When problems with collection arise, each household must contact the waste disposal company directly, rather than having the town help resolve the problem.

Democratic Committee members have met with town officials to discuss the issue and were met with pessimism and negative attitudes. With limited competition from private providers, the people of Clarence have been charged more for less services. A municipal waste negotiated through the town would ensure residents have a stable, and fair solution for waste collection.

It was not until one year after the changes in service from Waste Management and Modern that the town agreed to hire a consultant to determine the feasibility of municipal waste management. We are continuing to call for a municipal waste management strategy.

Clarence Dems Urge Climate Action

“Time Running Out for our Environment, Action is Needed Now”

Our Climate in Crisis

Time is running out for the environment according to Judith Enck, former U.S. EPA regional administrator and president of Beyond Plastics, an environmental advocacy group. Ms. Enck moderated a discussion on the environment sponsored by Beyond Plastics and featuring environmental leader and author, Bill McKibben, and Pulitzer prize-winning journalist, Elizabeth Kolbert.

According to Mr. McKibben, the next 18 months will be critical for our planet. The weather will be in turmoil and chaos. There will be more rain, flooding, fires and wind - an increase in more severe climate. He indicated that the need to have clean energy in the next 5 years is critical.

Mr. McKibben has traveled all over the world on the issue of climate change and has learned the power of the corporate fossil fuel industry. According to him, a major obstacle to dealing with this environmental crisis is that industry, which he describes as a “past master of corporate dark arts.”

“If you’ve been watching just TV advertising for the last decade, you might conclude that Exxon was a company that happened to have an odd oil well on the side someplace. When, in fact, they were spending 98 to 99 percent of their R and D and exploration budget on the same old hydrocarbons they’d always been on...” Mr. McKibben said, emphasizing, “Do not waste any time over the thought that surely these people have grandchildren too... They are going to continue to do everything they can do to keep their business model intact because that business model is highly profitable... They’re terrified of things like solar energy because it is so cheap and available.”

Mr. McKibben has started a group called “Third Act” for people over 60. Currently, there are many of these groups coming together to deal with Climate Change and its causes.

According to an updated report by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) 2022 was “another intense year of costly disasters and extremes throughout much of the country.” The NOAA reported that it was another year with a high diversity of destructive disasters:



Last year the U.S. experienced 18 separate weather and climate disasters costing at least 1 billion dollars. 2022 tied 2017 and 2011 for the third highest number of billion-dollar disasters. 2022 was also third highest in total costs (behind 2017 and 2005), with a price tag of at least \$165 billion.

Judith Enck stressed, “The climate crisis is unfolding in real time... the damage is really worldwide and its especially hurting the poor. Major flooding in Spain, India and Japan... the Canadian wildfire smoke is choking people not just in Canada but the United States.”

Ms. Enck concluded the discussion by noting that “the basics really matter. Like getting a bunch of people registered to vote, giving ... money to environmental groups... We need everyone and we need to lift the voices of the environmental justice communities... It’s kind of basic. It’s civic democracy... We’ve got the facts. What we don’t have is time on our side...”

Clarence needs to be Proactive

Last winter was marked by unusually high average temperatures, as well as devastating snow and ice storms. Climate change is here, and we are beginning to feel the pressures. New York State is moving forward on its climate action plan while the Town of Clarence is on the back foot, according to Alex Maccallini, Chair of the Clarence Democratic Committee.

“We’ve taken more steps backward than forwards.” Said Chairman Maccallini, “The Town Board moved to ban large-scale utility solar, which was a popular move in conservative Clarence. We’ve heard that from the residents, they place great emphasis on our character and charm. Realistically, we won’t change on that front, but there’s plenty more to be done to actually enhance that character, while also being climate conscious.”

This includes prioritizing local farmers and food systems, consolidating our waste collection system, and promoting local walking and bicycling. Committee Members are doing our part to limit single-use plastics, recycling, and composting when possible. Committee members are also attending and organizing meetings with county and local organizations to show the public how Clarence can take part in climate action.

Local GOP Called Out For Hypocrisy

“@ChrissyCaboom” Unqualified Candidate for Erie County’s Highest Office



The Republican Party’s attacks of Democratic County Executive Mark Poloncarz’s recent controversy are a hypocritical attempt to bolster the prospects of an unfit Republican candidate for County Executive, as pointed out by the Chair of the Erie County Democratic Party, Jeremy Zellner.

“MAGA Republicans who stand by Donald Trump after multiple indictments demonstrate their utter hypocrisy when they attack County Executive Poloncarz on the basis of an unfortunate relationship breakup.” Chairman Zellner wrote in a message to local Democrats.

Chrissy Casilio, daughter of Clarence Town Supervisor Patrick Casilio is a political newcomer running for County Executive. Ms. Casilio has never run for or held any public office and is now seeking the highest public office in Erie County. Ms. Casilio has called for a special prosecutor to be named to investigate County Executive Poloncarz, as well as calling for his resignation.

Mr. Zellner highlighted the fact that Ms. Casilio “is best known for weaving conspiracy theories, supporting the January 6th insurrection, and opposing women’s right to choose.” Before she became a candidate, she had a Twitter account @chrissycaboom, where she tweeted a host of misinformation. In one tweet, she touted the debunked QAnon suspicion that the online furniture company Wayfair was involved in child sex trafficking. Other posts included comments and replies to other Twitter users about whether the 2020 presidential election was “rigged” and that ANTIFA and Democrats were responsible for the violence on the Capitol on January 6th. Another called into question the cause of local sports personalities facing health issues last year including Buffalo Bills defenseman Damar Hamlin’s near-death experience on the field. You can learn more about Chrissy’s concerning Twitter history at chrissytweets.com.

No more experienced and well-known Republicans were willing to challenge the three-term Democratic incumbent for the office of County Executive. Chairman Zellner characterized the GOP as being “saddled with an unfit candidate for county executive (and) is politicizing this and other issues in the hopes of lending her some credibility.”

“It won’t work.” Mr. Zellner concluded, “I have known Mark for 20 years as a passionate defender of the rights and dignity of others, one who has led us to our first era of growth in 50 years while restoring the county’s fiscal health and building a new economy for the future.”

County Executive Poloncarz has shown steady and effective leadership in his 12 years in office. Property tax rates county-wide have consistently fallen under his leadership, with Clarence tied for second in Erie County municipalities for the highest rate drop between 2022 and 2023 (-4.30%).

What We Are Up Against:

An Alarm Bell for Democrats

2024 is a presidential election year. As we head towards primary season, it looks increasingly likely that former president Donald Trump will remain the GOP's candidate to challenge President Joe Biden. The partisanship at the national stage has permeated to the local level in an unprecedented way. The late Tip O'Neill, former Speaker of the House, used to like quoting the old political adage: All politics is local. That truism has become inverted in the last few decades. Now, all local politics is national. That is especially true as we face the 2024 election.

A disturbing study has been published by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS). According to the August PNAS report, "Republican members of Congress who supported President Trump's 'stop the steal' efforts following the 2020 election suffered little or no electoral penalty in contested general elections in 2022.

In their study, entitled: "House Republicans were rewarded for supporting Donald Trump's 'stop the steal' efforts," (Aug. 14, 2022), Larry M. Bartels, Department of Political Science, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, and Nicholas Carnes, Sanford School of Public Policy, Duke University, Durham, NC, found no evidence "that members who supported Trump did better or worse in contested general election races. However, Trump supporters were less likely to lose primary elections, more likely to run unopposed in the general election, more likely to run for higher office, and less likely to retire from politics. Overall, there seem to have been no significant political costs and some significant rewards in 2022 for House Republicans who supported Trump's undemocratic behavior."

On a practical level, this study pours some cold water over the results of the 2022 midterms, which many Democrats and liberal pundits touted as a rebuke to Trump and MAGA Republicanism.

"These findings cast doubt on characterizations of the 2022 election as 'an important victory for US democracy,'" The authors wrote, "And raise concerns about the extent to which Republican primary voters and party officials may condone or encourage future undemocratic behavior by Republican elected officials."

The study pointed out that election-deniers who ran for statewide offices in 2022 “underperformed” by a few percentage points. Most election-deniers who lost in statewide races were “political novices who might well have lost regardless of their opinions about Trump. The electoral fortunes of incumbent members of Congress provide a clearer test of how voters reacted to violations of democratic principles.”

Profound Threat To Democracy

This report is an alarm bell for local, state and the national Democratic Party against complacency. The Democrats held on to the Senate largely because of the incompetence of GOP candidates such as Kari Lake and Dr. Oz. Messaging will be important in reaching so-called “independents,” who generally vote Republican, and disaffected Republicans put off by Trumpian excesses, as well as motivating the Democratic base.

This is an especially difficult task given the present climate of fake news promulgated by Fox, One America and their ilk. As conservative columnist and journalist, Mona Charin, highlighted in a PBS Frontline interview: “The greatest betrayal on the part of Republican leaders was the betrayal of truth itself. Because without a common set of facts and a common understanding of what we’re dealing with, self-government becomes very difficult, if not impossible. ... This level of deception is corrupting our country. It is corroding people’s confidence in the electoral process and in democracy itself. It represents a profound threat.”

As mentioned, the findings of the PNAS report raise concerns about the potential for future bad behavior by GOP officials and candidates in upcoming elections. So far, their “base” has not held them to account. If anything, they have been rewarded.

As Americans, we pride ourselves on the strength and endurance of our Constitution. We boast of our commitment to democracy and the Republic. However, as November 2024 approaches, we should keep in mind the words of John Adams, Founding Father and second President, in an 1814 letter to his friend John Taylor: “Democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts and murders itself. There never was a Democracy Yet, that did not commit suicide.”

With Trump’s histrionics, false information, GOP dirty tricks and unfounded conspiracy theories, it’s up to Democrats to talk America down off the ledge.

**We need your help to keep
democratic institutions alive**