

# Palo Alto Rotary Pinion

September 27, 2021

Reporter: KIM BOMAR

Editor: LYLE CONNELL

At 12:33, PRESIDENT CASH ALAEE rang the Rotary bell and called the meeting to order.

## VISITING ROTARIANS AND ROTARIANS WITH GUESTS.

President-Elect KAREN ROHDE noted there were no visiting Rotarians. REBECCA GERALDI introduced Thomas Ziebarth, a Tesla software engineer who is attending his fourth meeting.

**THOUGHT OF THE DAY:** KEVIN CURRY shared the differences between the two Rotary clubs of which he has been a member. Palo Alto Rotary focuses on non-profit organizations; the other Rotary club focused on enterprise, with an emphasis on business success. This resulted in quite a difference, particularly in terms of speakers. According to KEVIN, Palo Alto Rotary has the best collection of speakers of any club he has attended or been part of.



## PRESIDENT'S CLUB

TRISH BUBENIK joined the President's Club to contribute to Rotary in lieu of the ways that she cannot participate for health reasons. Helping Rotary's charitable causes is one way she is happy to contribute and participate now.



LIZ KNISS joined the President's Club



because she was able to usher, with several others, at the Palo Alto Players' performance of "Working." LIZ also paid tribute to ELIZABETH SANTANA, Managing Director of the Palo Alto Players, and thanked DANA TOM for organizing this volunteer opportunity.

CASH joined the President's club in honor of STEPHEN PLAYER who recently received the Avenidas Lifetime Achievement Award.



STEVE said he believes the most important things in life are to be open to new ideas and



experiences, to be grateful for what we have, and to be ready to serve, all of which are reflected by Rotary.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS, REPORTS AND REMINDERS

CASH thanked SOHELIA MOZAYAN and MATT DOLAN for hosting the recent TGIF at Ability Path.

Many thanks to the Rotarians and spouses LIZ KNISS, KAREN ROHDE, ANNETTE GLANCKOPF, JON AND O'MALLEY STOUMAN, DANA TOM AND

NANCY KAWAKITA for volunteering as ushers for the Palo Alto Players.

## UPCOMING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- The MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE is meeting Tuesday, September 28th from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm.
- The CENTENIALCOMMITTEE is meeting Tuesday, September 28th from 4:00 – 5:00 pm
- CLUB CONVERSATIONS COMMITTEE formed for Supporting the Environment has meetings Tuesday, September 28 and Tuesday, October 4, from 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM. The topic will also be discussed at the Tuesday, October 13th Board Meeting
- DISTRICT AVENUES OF SERVICE Meeting will be held Tuesday by Zoom.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

This Saturday there is an in person District Rotary event at the Alameda County fairgrounds to share our local service projects and join projects of other clubs. Palo Alto Rotary is seeking 3 or 4 volunteers to attend. There's no cost to attend. Hawaiian specialty cocktails and music of the islands will be available throughout the Saturday event. Also present will be the inspirational Linda Coble – a Woman of Firsts: first woman club President for Rotary Club of Honolulu, first woman CBS Anchor for Honolulu, and first woman District Governor for District 5000.

On Wednesday, October 13<sup>th</sup> from 5:30-6:30 pm, is a happy hour at Vino Locale at 431 Kipling Street, Palo Alto

On Friday, October 29th from 5:30 – 7:00 pm, a special Halloween TGIF will be held at Pat and Steve Emslie's home.

The annual Holiday Party will take place on Wednesday, December 8th at the Palo Alto Art Center.

BEN THRELKELD led the appeal for donations to the Rotary Foundation.



This fundraiser takes place from September 27 to October 25. The goal is to raise \$23,000 for TRF and \$2,500 for End Polio Now. We are striving for 100% participation at any level, with a suggested target of \$200 per Rotarian. If 130 Rotarians participate at this level, the club will exceed its goal. Please check your mail for donation envelopes which will arrive soon. BEN shared an inspiring video about the impact made by these crucial donations.

CASH thanked the VOLUNTEERS FOR TODAY'S MEETING: Guest Introductions, KAREN ROHDE; Pinion writer, KIM BOMAR; Pinion editor: LYLE CONNELL; Zoom Co-Hosts: BEN THRELKELD and DANA TOM.

## NEXT WEEK'S PROGRAM

The next meeting's speaker will be Robert Pearl, MD, Stanford University Medical and Business School Professor, and former CEO of Kaiser Permanente, presenting on: "Uncaring: How the Culture of Medicine Kills Doctors and Patients"

## TODAY'S PROGRAM

**SPEAKER INTRODUCTION.** STANS KLEIJNEN introduced today's speaker.

John Sebes is a co-founder and Chief Technology Officer ("CTO") for the U.S. based OSET Institute ("OSET"), a non-partisan non-profit 501(c)(3) headquartered in Silicon Valley. He leads all aspects of technology strategy, vision, architecture, engineering and development for the TrustTheVote Project – the flagship effort of the Institute. Prior to the TrustTheVote Project, John has been a software



developer, technical consultant, working in several areas, including network infrastructure, embedded systems, data center operations, with strong common themes of risk management, security, privacy, and reliability. He has been working in the non-profit world with a focus on election technology for over a decade. John is a co-author of 12 patents and 20+ publications. He graduated from Yale.



The title of John's presentation was: "Five Ways to Rig American Elections Legally, and How Everyone Can Respond."

**Rigging elections is legal and customary**, and has been practiced since the beginning. An example is gerrymandering, which allows elected officials to pick their voters. The popular vote in Pennsylvania is split roughly 50/50 but one party gets two-thirds of the seats in Congress as a result of gerrymandering.

List management is another way to rig elections. This is how election officials set voting parameters preferentially so their party can win. List management is not inherently a problem, but can be abused for partisan purposes. For example, in Florida in the 2000 election, voter list management was outsourced to a private company without expertise. As a result, numerous voters were removed from the voter rolls and disenfranchised. There's no doubt this shaped the electorate. For another example, in Georgia in 2018, Brian Kemp placed 53,000 voter registrations on hold until after the election. This was a new rule that he made as Secretary of State, though he was running for governor in the election. There was no time for litigation or legal recourse regarding the paused registrations.

Voter ID laws that are structured to disproportionately affect "others"—people believed to be disproportionately for the other team—are another way to rig elections, as is lower allocation of voting resources to "other" voters.

Despite the impact of this rigging, it is not possible to steal an election through vote rigging. Election results are based on counting the ballots that are legitimately cast. Vote rigging is influencing, but not stealing, as long as votes that are cast are counted. One example was the Brooks Brothers riots. George W. Bush won in Florida by 537 votes. During that election, ballot counting stopped in Broward county because their offices were invaded and they weren't permitted to continue counting. By the time they resumed, Katherine Harris, Jeb Bush's Secretary of State, required all counties to stop counting ballots. She had the power to do that. Her actions likely changed the election results, but the election was not stolen because the cast and counted ballots determined the winner.

US elections definitely have been hacked. Nation-state cyber attackers have attacked the computing systems of state and local electronic businesses. Notable attacks beginning in 2016 were cyber actors associated with Russian intelligence services who broke into voter registration systems. Federal officials say there's no evidence that election results were affected, but there's no disclosure of how much anyone looked for evidence that results were affected. In addition to cyber-attacks, there are also cyber-attacks plus intentional disinformation. Foreign actors seed lies and amplify them through social media. The goal is to undermine trust in our elections.

US elections are no longer stolen. Unlike the old days of Chicago style ballot stuffing, the Heritage Foundation has an election fraud database proving that election stealing essentially no longer occurs.

**Was the 2020 election stolen? No.** The Stop the Steal movement was the next iteration of misinformation and disinformation by politicians and their lawyers for political purposes. Mike Lindell became their primary amplifier—claiming that certain voting systems have cybersecurity vulnerabilities because they rely on the internet to count votes. They do not. There's ample evidence that this is all false, but people believe it anyway. It's too easy to dismiss all these people as stupid, but there are tens of millions of people who believe the Big Lie. Ongoing ballot challenges are designed to keep people questioning election integrity.

What can we do to help? Fight the Big Lie when you encounter it. Be forewarned to resist disinformation and misinformation from your friends and family, and be realistic that vote rigging exists. Encourage those in states that are changing election laws to make them fairer.

Responses to several questions included the following:

Regarding the voiding of elections, as Trump tried to do, Sebes replied that once elections are certified, no state has a way to change the result.

When asked if the Freedom to Vote Act would pass. Sebes responded that unless Senators Sinema and Manchin agreed to overturn the filibuster, there was zero chance of that happening.

Sebes also noted that Facebook is the primary playground for misinformation and disinformation, as it is part of their business model. He added, as long as Mark Zuckerberg refuses to acknowledge any fault of Facebook, nothing will change.

Sebes also noted that voter registration began as a disenfranchisement tool, though over the years it has become useful for managing elections. Some states have automatic voter registration, some do not. Some states believe Democracy is stronger when more people can vote and elected officials are accountable to a large number of people; some states do not. Politicians won't make policy based on people who don't vote for them, so more voters ensure better Democracy.

When asked what more can we do to make elections better, Sebes replied move to nearly all paper elections in which everyone casts a paper ballot together with a ballot audit to ensure computers don't make a mistake and we elect the wrong person. Another is much greater public transparency over voter list management to make public how we add or remove voters from voter rolls, providing evidence that that everyone who was able to vote did, and that everyone's vote was counted.

Cash thanked John Sebes and Rotarians for speaking.

Cash closed the meeting at 1:38