

Republican Party of Barron County  
Summary of Complaints  
and  
Findings by the Constitution Committee of the Republican Party of Wisconsin

December 7, 2023

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- 1) Failure to comply with Article III of the Constitution of the Republican Party of Wisconsin, which requires county parties “to maintain control of the Republican Party of Wisconsin [of which county organization are a constituent part] in the hands of grassroots Republicans” and Article II of the Constitution of the Republican Party of Barron County, which says “this organization shall direct, manage, supervise, and control the business, property, and funds of The Republican Party of Barron County.”

Summary

- a) There have been numerous instances reported regarding a general lack of transparency, with decisions being made in closed sessions or in non-properly noticed meetings, in many cases without the involvement or knowledge of the general membership, with Executive Committee members being required to sign a document agreeing not to discuss Executive Committee proceedings with the general membership or others. There have also been reports of Executive Committee decisions being made by email, which is not currently authorized in the BCRP Constitution, with certain sitting Executive Committee members being excluded from participating.
- b) There have been some instances reported of basic information regarding meeting and membership records being kept from BCRP members or certain Executive Committee members and elected Republican officials.
- c) There have been numerous instances of complaints regarding the Chairman not recognizing those members at meetings who do not agree with his views or in denigrating those whose views diverge from his, while chairing the meeting and in his role as the presiding officer.
- d) There have been complaints regarding the process of filling vacancies and electing members to the Executive Committee.
- e) There have been complaints regarding the management of events and the disposition of funds to support those events that have resulted in less than anticipated revenue.

Findings

- a) Regular monthly meetings of the general membership have not been held since June of 2023 and meetings of the Executive Committee, when held, have been held without notice to the general membership. Executive Committee decisions have also been made outside of regular meetings, which is currently not authorized by the Constitution of the Republican Party of Barron County.
- b) By action of the Executive Committee of the Republican Party of Barron County, Jenna Mitzel, Secretary of the Republican Party of Barron County, and Executive Committee member Tim Wold, both elected by the membership of the county party, have been excluded from

participating in Executive Committee proceedings, which has effectively removed them from office in violation of Article IV, Section V the Constitution of the Republican Party of Barron County and contrary to the basic tenets of Robert's Rules of Order relating to removal of officers.

- c) Prior to the "removal" of Jenna Mitzel as Secretary, she was denied access to membership records and was prevented from maintaining minutes of meetings, both basic responsibilities of the Secretary as outlined in Article IV, Section 4 of the Constitution the Republican Party of Barron County.
- d) For all intents and purposes, an Acting Secretary has been appointed by the Chairman. It is not known if that appointment was approved by the Executive Committee, which is required in Article IV, Section 5 of the Constitution of the Republican Party of Barron County.

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- 2) Failure to comply with Article IV, Section Five of the Constitution of the Republican Party of Barron County, which establishes as one of the duties of the Executive Committee to "recommend for cause the removal of Members, and Officers, to the general membership, upon a majority vote of the Executive Committee."
- a) There has been some confusion about whether at least two members have been expelled and at least two members of the Executive Committee have been removed from their offices by vote of the Executive Committee alone, without following the investigatory and hearing process outlined in Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, and without a vote by the general membership. In addition, the two members and two officers in question have not received any communications from the county party and the two officers have not been included in Executive Committee meetings and communications.
- b) To date, the Executive Committee has not responded to requests from the RPW Constitution Committee Chair for clarification.

#### Findings

- a) Contrary to Article IV, Section Five, and Article XI, Section One of the Constitution of the Republican Party of Barron County, two members, Romaine Quinn and Randy Cook, have essentially been expelled from membership by the Executive Committee of the Republican Party of Barron County and the matter has not yet been referred to the general membership for approval.
- b) Information on the "cause" for this action, also a requirement of Article IV, Section Five, and Article XI, Section One, has not been presented to the Constitution Committee.

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- 3) Failure to comply with Article VIII, Section 4 of the Constitution of the Republican Party of Wisconsin, which authorizes delegates and alternates to the District Caucus and State Convention to be elected at the County Caucus, but states "The members in good standing at the County Caucus may authorize the County Chairman to substitute delegates after the County Caucus if the County Chairman certified in writing that the added delegate is a member in good standing of that County and the deleted delegate, if any, has no objection to the deletion."

- a) It has been reported that there has been at least one instance in which a member of good standing was notified they were being removed as a delegate over that delegate's objection.

#### Findings

- a) Contrary to Article VIII, Section 4 of the Constitution of the Republican Party of Wisconsin, Romaine Quinn has been removed as a delegate by the Chairman and over his objection.

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- 4) Failure to comply with Article V, Section One of the Constitution of the Republican Party of Barron County, which states "Meetings or caucuses shall be held upon proper notice, at the call of the Chairman or at the direction of the Executive Committee, or upon petition of twenty-five (25) members in good standing."

- a) It has been reported that a properly introduced petition signed by at least 25 members was submitted to the Executive Committee and was declared improper.
- b) Once convened, the Chairman and Vice Chairman misused the quorum provision of the BCRP Constitution by not attending and later declared the meeting was also improper for not meeting the quorum requirements.

#### Findings

- a) Contrary to the requirements of Article V, Section One of the Constitution of the Republican Party of Barron County, a duly called membership meeting, called by the membership through the petition process in June 2023, was not recognized and conducted by the leadership of the Republican Party of Barron County, as required under this provision.
- b) The Chairman and Vice Chairman declared this same meeting to be null and void by boycotting the meeting and through the misapplication of the requirement that either the Chairman or Vice Chairman must be in attendance for a quorum to be established.

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- 5) Failure to comply with Article III of the Constitution of the Republican Party of Wisconsin, which requires "members in good standing" to be those members "who meet the membership requirements of the Republican organization in the county of their residence."

- a) There have been complaints that non-resident BCRP members, from time to time, have been allowed to vote and fully participate at BCRP meetings.

#### Findings

- a) By the Chairman's own admission, at last one non-resident member of the Republican Party of Barron County was allowed to vote at the 2023 Annual Caucus, which, in the opinion of the RPW Constitution Committee, renders that caucus null and void.

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- 6) Failure to Comply with Article III of the Constitution of the Republican Party of Wisconsin, which requires county party organizations “to maintain harmony between all Republican Party organizations [which would include local, state, and federal candidate campaign committees],” and Article II of the Republican Party of Barron County, which requires the organization to “aid in every honorable way fundamental Republican principles and policies, and as a voluntary organization to cooperate and assist in all county, state, and national elections. . .”
- a) There have been complaints about local, state, or national candidates having been blocked from speaking at local BCRP events or otherwise having had their participation limited. There have also been specific complaints from local elected officials about the impact that local party dysfunction will have on their campaigns within the county.
  - b) There have been complaints of instances in which the leadership of the BCRP, particularly its Chairman, have publicly criticized Republican elected officials serving Barron County, thus undercutting their efforts to campaign effectively within the county. There have also been reports that the County Chairman had threatened to run for a particular county office in an effort to undermine the incumbent.
  - c) There have been complaints about the Chair and Executive Committee voting to “censure” certain Republican elected officials and even removing from the membership (or initiating the removal process for) certain Republican elected officials.

#### Findings

- a) There is a general lack of confidence in the local leadership of the Republican Party of Barron County by a large number of county party members and a significant number of Republican elected officials serving Barron County.

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- 7) Failure to comply with Article III, Section Nine of the Constitution of the Republican Party of Barron County, which states “Executive Committee Members who used their position to advance non-endorsed candidates in partisan elections shall resign their position or be subject to removal from the Executive Committee.”
- a) As referenced earlier, the County Chairman reportedly made public that he was considering a run for a county office while still in his position as Chairman.
  - b) There have also been reports that the County Chairman has used the official county party Facebook page to call for the withdrawal of specified Presidential candidates, presumably to favor the advancement of other candidates.

#### Findings

- a) There have been some questionable dealings between the County Party Chairman and several Republican elected officials serving Barron County.

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Other Items of Note:

- a) In June of 2023, and as a courtesy, the Chairman of the Constitution Committee initially contacted the Barron County Chairman prior to, and was also in touch with him during, a membership-initiated effort to schedule a special membership meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to begin a constitutionally permitted process to remove county party leaders, an effort that was ultimately blocked by the Barron County Chairman and Vice Chairman.
- b) In July and August 2023, the Chairman of the Constitution Committee worked with an attorney, representing the interests of the Barron County Republican Party leadership, on developing a compromise that would allow the Republican Party of Barron County to make constitutional and policy changes that would address member complaints and allow the County Chairman of the Barron County Republican Party to stay unchallenged in his leadership role until the end of his term. The proposal was summarized in an email to the attorney from the Constitution Committee Chairman that also included an offer to come to Barron County to meet with the Barron County Executive Committee. Representatives of the Republican Party of Wisconsin have only recently confirmed that the attorney had a meeting with the Chairman and an additional county party member to do a detailed review of the proposal and the proposal was rejected by the Chairman. The Chairman of the Constitution Committee never received a formal response from the County Chairman or the attorney and, at the November 15<sup>th</sup> meeting that took place in Barron County, numerous members of the Executive Committee, including the County Chairman, denied that they were aware of such a proposal.
- c) In September 2023, the Chairman of the Constitution Committee received word that elected members of the County Executive Committee had been improperly removed from their positions. The Constitution Committee Chairman wrote to the County Chairman indicating the State Party would not recognize the removal and providing information on what the proper procedure would be. The Constitution Committee Chairman also requested a copy of the Barron County membership list, a request which went unacknowledged and to which a response was never received.
- d) Numerous requests for information or to talk with or meet with the Barron County Chairman, to resolve the issue of member complaints, were unanswered or rebuffed, including at least four phone calls from the Constitution Committee Chairman in September and October. The Constitution Committee never received a reply to his October 11<sup>th</sup> response to an October 9<sup>th</sup> email from the County Chairman, in which he offered to make himself available "to talk anytime."
- e) In the weeks prior to the November 15<sup>th</sup> meeting in Barron County, the Constitution Committee Chairman made numerous requests for a copy of the Barron County membership list and those requests were unacknowledged and not responded to.
- f) Despite numerous references in correspondence and notices leading up to the November 15<sup>th</sup> meeting in Barron County that the proceedings surrounding the Barron County membership complaints were to be conducted in closed session, an ad, with no disclaimer, appeared in the Rice Lake newspaper the week of the meeting inviting members of the public to attend an important "Republican Party of Wisconsin Listening Session." While representatives of the Barron County Republican Party Executive Committee brought the ad to the attention of the Constitution Committee during the meeting, declared that they had no idea who had placed the ad, and used the

ad as the basis of a request to hold the meeting in open session, it was later learned that a member of the Barron County Republican Party Executive Committee had actually placed the ad.

- g) Also, in the weeks leading up to the Barron County meeting on November 15<sup>th</sup>, there was a concerted effort to recruit political activists from throughout the state to appear at the closed meeting and show support for the Barron County leadership. Information contained in a communication that was reviewed by the Republican Party of Wisconsin would seem to indicate that the content of the communication originated with the Barron County GOP, despite numerous requests and reminders from the Constitution Committee that all information regarding the meeting should be kept confidential.
- h) Following the meeting in Barron County on November 15<sup>th</sup>, the Constitution Committee Chair and Vice Chair informally discussed a compromise proposal with the County Chairman, his advisor, and another party representative, that could end the strife in Barron County in lieu of further action by the Constitution Committee and the State Party. There was never a direct response to the proposal, other than a counterproposal that would have extended the possible resolution of this matter until after the county caucus season and well into the primary election time.