**Minutes of SDC Meeting**

**28 March 2017**

**Attendance**. Members: Rick Cousin, Bill Barr, Kathy Gordon, Pamela Ross, Mary Anne Wrolsen, Alessandra Farkas,Elisabeth Lennon, Connie Bailey, Elisabeth Lennon, Judith Lechner, Nancy Schaef, Finley Schaef, Chris Allen, Margo McGilvrey, Elizabeth Murphy, Skip Arthur, Luz Mooney, Mike Harkavy, Kathleen Gray and Lanny Walter. Nonmembers: Susan Weeks, Ginny Davey, David Bailey, Jeff Beales, Doug Meyer, Julie Dunn, Chad McPeak, Michael Cimorelli, Barry Kerr.

**Approval of Feb 28 SDC Minutes:** Moved by Barr, Seconded Mooney. Change noted by Lanny Walter under Search Committee. Candidate School being offered by Rosendale Democratic Committee is being offered April 8, not March 8, at Rosendale Rec Center. Approved as amended.

**Election District Assignment:** The Chair distributed the new list for review by those present with a view to voting on it at the end of the meeting. He pointed out that the district assignments will be formalized later in the meeting.

**Treasurer’s Report:** The balance as of 28 Feb 17 was $1,243.75. $147 were collected at the meeting and a $200 donation was received for development of our website. This resulted in a balance of $1590.70. Margo McGilvrey moved to approve, seconded by Beth Murphy and unanimously approved.

**Search Committee:** The Chair noted that no Democrats have stepped forward as of yet. Only County candidate is Chris Allen. Mark Rider, attorney in County Executive office, is chair of Ulster Town Democratic Committee and said the committee has new life and that perhaps a candidate will emerge from there. The Chair discussed other possibilities and said the Executive Committee, now serving as the Search Committee, will meet with some candidates on April 12.

**Upcoming Primary Method:** The discussion then moved to whether Saugerties Democrats should move from a caucus system to a primary system for selecting candidates. The Chair moved that we move to having a primary, which was seconded by Nancy Schaef. Discussion: The Chair made his case for moving to a Primary. One issue is that there is more time available to vote. The Primary is from noon to 9pm. The Caucus is generally in the evening, one night. The Primary would be run by the state and not cost anything. The Primary is really a petitioning system. Petition collection would be required for town candidates. This Committee would prepare the petitions in May. Signatures are collected in June and July by the Committee. Those identified in July and running uncontested would be the candidate in the general election. It is possible in this system that our candidate would not be chosen by Sep 12 if there is a contest. There are 3,800 Democrats in Saugerties. At the Caucus, we have had about 200 present. It was pointed out that turnout is also low in local primaries absent a presidential race. Only Democrats can run and vote in a Primary, whereas non-Democrats can caucus; such is the case for town board members. The Party (this Committee), by a majority vote, can grant a Wilson-Piccoulla to a non-Democrat to run on the Democratic line. In a Caucus system, that is not present. The Chair said the Saugerties Republicans have voted to move to a Primary system (though that term is a little misleading because there is no primary if there is only one candidate). He said there is a reputation for a Caucus to be “boss-driven”, but that is not always the case.

Mike Harkavy made the case for keeping the Caucus method. He noted it has been done for local offices for the last 25 years. He said there is a strategic reason to caucus this year because it gives the Democrats the ability to identify its candidates before the Republicans. Republicans won’t ID their candidates until September. The Dems can have a caucus by June 6 and immediately have candidates identified who then can begin campaigning and have signs out shortly thereafter. Second, they can develop their whole agenda. Also they can begin fund-raising immediately. ln his opinion, a Caucus is more democratic because it allows the rank and file to influence the outcome over the so-called party bosses. He gave an example where that happened. He said it’s much more difficult to have that sort of outcome in a primary. He also claimed that the Caucus states were the source of victory in the election of Barak Obama and said it was also true of Bernie Sander’s campaign.

The Chair pointed out that Sanders got 2/3 of the vote in our area in a Primary. He also said people running don’t have to wait until September to begin running. Their signs can go out sooner. He said Democrats have been apathetic and thinks we need to shake things up. Beth Murphy countered that we can’t have a primary with only one candidate and challenged the Chair’s Bernie Sanders comparison. Mike Harkavy said that the Primary could result in an unpopular Democrat getting nominated.

Margot McGilvrey asked if it was important to make a decision tonight to which the Chair responded that it does not.

Mary Ann Wrolsen moved that we table the discussion until the next meeting. The motion was seconded, a vote was taken and the motion to table until next month passed.

**County Executive Presentation:** Michael Hein began by thanking those present for being engaged. Said it’s too bad we don’t have town hall meetings. He then moved to the Health Forum and discussed Dr. Carol Smith who said the biggest health threat to Ulster County is the repeal of the ACA and its proposed replacement. As a result, he issued an Executive Order to come forward with a report on the impact on Ulster County health and budget. They found that 19,000 people in Ulster County would be impacted. He acknowledged that the ACA is flawed but that is not a reason to abandon it, and need to do so without compromising our humanity. He said the Forum was bursting at the seams and had Congressional representation. He said he had talked to Congressman Faso the day before who expressed his regrets at being unable to attend. Mr. Hein reminded him that it was his vote that pushed it forward. He went on to say that the Forum was a great example of democracy in Ulster County.

**Kathy Gordon Presentation on Voter Data:** Kathy said she wanted to use the data to determine how to approach Democrats in her Election District and where active voters are. She looked at voting history. First she eliminated those with no voting history. She noted that there are 24 new Democrats and she wants to visit each of them. She then looked at 3 different elections and found 70% who voted in all of them. They are the reliable voters that we don’t need to worry about. She composed a letter to them to introduce herself.

She then looked at on-year elections. There was a spread of just 72-73% turn out in all categories. In an off-year election, Democrats went from 73% to 60%. In 2015, she found that only 93 out of 260 Democrats voted.

She said her analysis told her how to work her district, but would benefit from talking to those who had been doing it. She will focus on areas where there are no voters shown. She offered that it would be valuable to have buttons for petitioning.

**Election District Assignments revisited:** The Chair asked for comments on ED assignments. The Chair moved to approve the assignment preseneted. It was seconded by Mike Harkavy and passed unanimously.

**Immigration Action in Saugerties:** Barry Kerr spoke to the Committee. He had volunteered to lead the Indivisible subcommittee on immigration. It has turned into the Saugerties Sanctuary Movement. (He pointed out the need to use the word “sanctuary” because of its meaning to immigrants.)

He said this all began with the Holy Cross Church in Kingston. He said a sanctuary has been established in the church. He is trying to establish a similar place with the Iglesia Emmanuel in Saugerties and trying to get volunteers and linguists to work in Saugerties. He said Chief Sinagra will not turn people in unless they are stopped for a felony. He requested people to give email and cell phone addresses to notify when people are in trouble. They would be used for public support for those people..

**Announcement from Jeff Beales,** a member of the Woodstock Democratic Committee. That committee has been discussing how to flip a gerrymandered district like Congressional District 19. One idea is to try and create a community using “New York 19 Speaks” that would be a newsletter. [Info@ny19speaks.org](mailto:Info@ny19speaks.org). They plan to have a first issue out in a month and may also be doing a NY19 podcast. He was asked how this meshes with other NY19 movements. Jeff said it’s the same (like “Swing Left” and “Indivisible”). He also discussed Get Out the Vote efforts being sponsored by Citizen Action.

**Fundraising:** The Chair said it had been suggested that we brainstorm ways to raise funds. He noted that Connie Bailey had an idea and turned it over to her. Connie said that another aspect of doing a fundraising event is attracting younger people and offered the use of her commercial kitchen to have a dinner at the Senior Center. She said we would need people for publicity, a 50-50 raffle, ticket sellers, probably totaling 6 or 8 people. It would be a good way to build community. She said she already has a volunteer for music. She was sure we could make a profit and would make us more of a team and bring people in. Mary Ann pointed out that alcohol is not allowed at the Sr. Ctr. Rick Cousin suggested trying to get Zephyr Teachout to speak. Volunteers: Alessandra Farkas, Judy Lechner, Rick Cousin, Kathleen Gordon, Luz Mooney, David Bailey, Finlay and Nancy Schaef, Margot McGilvery and Elizabeth Murphy. It was agreed that volunteers could meet at the bakery after closing some night, divide up tasks and set goals.

**Village Election:** The Chair commented on the meager turn-out for the uncontested election.

**Town Issues:** Rick Cousin noted there is a DEC Clean Vehicle grant that is available for which towns may apply. It could bring EV charging stations at the Sr. Citizens Center, the ice rink and the John Street Parking Lot. He passed a petition for signatures supporting it.

**Anti-Semitism:** The Chair noted the recent incident at a Saugerties school and encouraged the Committee’s awareness and sharing of information around it. Luz Mooney had attended school board meetings regarding such events. She said false information has been given to parents regarding them. She said there is a need to have a well-understood protocol available and that a close eye needs to be kept on Saugerties’ actions in this regard. The Chair said that April 17 is the deadline to petition for running for the School Board. Petitions are available at the Superintendent’s office.

**Bristol Beach:** The moving force has been the Conservation Advisory Committee, who has revealed some grandiose ideas about what it may become. Mike Harkavy said the entire plan is available on the town website.

**County Issues:** Chris Allen said the Memorializing Resolution is coming up for a vote in the April meeting. He thinks the Republicans will win by a 13-10 vote.

**NYS Health Care Plan:** The Chair handed out information about the campaign for the NY Health Care Plan, a single payer plan.

**Website:** Rick Cousin looked at Word Press and Go-Daddy. He said he would recommend Word Press that would cost just $8 a month and give us flexibility. He will follow through and maintain the website.

**New Member:** David Bailey introduced himself. He said he moved here in November and, given the upsetting political time, wants to become involved politically. He currently works at the Hudson Valley Desert Company and was involved in Occupy Wall Street in Oakland. He is currently an enrolled Democrat. The Chair moved that David join the committee and represent Election District 12. It was seconded by Pam Ross and approved unanimously.

**Announcements:** Mary Wrolsen pointed out that the CAC will have a forum on Lime Disease at the Senior Center on April 20.

Jo Cicale has invited Bob Freeman to speak at the Sr. Citizens Center on May 9. He is Director of the NY State Commission on Open Government.

**Adjournment:** Moved and seconded, all in favor.

Respectfully submitted by

Bill Barr, Secretary