Minutes of SDC August 25, 2020 Virtual Meeting

**ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Bill Barr, Pamela Ross, Lanny Walter, Mike Harkavy, Barbara Boyce, Kevin Freeman, Nejla Liias, Nancy Schaef, Finley Schaef, Rick Cousin, Christine Dinsmore, John Schoonmaker, Margo McGilvrey, Louise Bloomfield, Aaron Levine, Skip Arthur, Bob Gelbach, Mike Cimorelli, Katherine Smith

Members Elect: Matt Maloney, Joe Maloney, Christine Via, Jeremy Russell

Guests: Claudia Andreassen, Jeff Collins, Ashley Dittus

**Secretary Moved to Approve Minutes from July 28, 2020 zoom meeting:** The motion was seconded by Barbara Boyce and passed unanimously.

**Treasurer’s Report:** Margo McGilvrey summarized the report below and moved that it be approved. The motion was seconded by Rick Cousin and unanimously approved.

Balance as of July 28th 2020 $1,446.15

Collected from Members 339.90

Return of Deposit from Town of Saugerties (1/29/2020) 115.00

Total Credits $1,901.05

Check #230 Ulster County Democratic Committee 200.00

Check # 231 Bill Barr for Zoom Account 149.90

Balance as of August 25, 2020 $1,551.15

**Guest presentation-Candidates for County Chair:**

**Jeff Collins.** He stated he is from Upstate NY, attended Cornell and majored in Computer Science. He spent 13 years in the technology field and opened his own business. He sold it in 2000 which allowed him to begin a career as an educator. He created the Sudbury School in Woodstock, in which students are part of democratic governance of the school. He feels that environment improves their self-worth and teaches the principles of democracy. He has wanted to get into politics after 2016. He won the State Democratic Committee role for Assembly District 103. As County Chair, he said some of his initiatives would be:

Voter outreach to create connection between Committee and voters.

Fundraising: The County Committee is currently in debt. We need to look at options such as lower levels of contribution other than one expensive dinner and also explore events open to people of all economic levels, and cultivate or curate high dollar donors as well.

Communication: Internal (looking at individual Committees) and external (make sure we get ahead of issues, such as bail reform being looked at by Legislature.

Party Building and Diversity: Need to make sure we are more diverse.

Leadership Responsibilities: Groom candidates, no conflict of interest. Ability to give time to the task that would conflict with Election Commissioner responsibilities.

**Ashley Dittus.** She has been Secretary since 2010. Ashley listed the changes she has brought about such as social media, improved data bases, and organizational tools. She feels she has outgrown that role and has a clear vision of where we should go in the next decade. She grew up in a working class/union household in Hurley. She interned with Maurice Hinchey which focused her direction toward politics. Following that she worked in the office of Kevin Cahill and later as a clerk in Board of Elections since 2011.

She sees being both County Chair and Election Commissioner as a benefit. In NYS there are many counties where the Chair shares this role. There have been some instances where some have been removed for doing a poor job and would have us hold her to the same standard. She works on the Democratic Election Council and said that she is considered by many in NYS as one of its most progressive Commissioners. She said she stands firm on making access to elections free and fair. Additionally, she has been working on updating the County Committee Bylaws and is happy to state that it’s finally coming together. She noted that the new Bylaws created collaborative teams with Vice Chairs that will assist the County Chair in performing duties. She is holding a Zoom Town Hall in early September. She said she is the only person in the race with the background required to lead strategic program development and she feels she has enough time to do it. She closed by saying she is endorsed by Delgado, Ryan and Figueroa and several Town committees.

**Questions:** Lanny was concerned by John Parete holding both jobs and sees the potential for conflict. How does one avoid it? Ashley: As Commissioner one takes an oath of office to be responsible and fair. She respects the law and using the office of Commissioner as a party office violates the principles of it. Her previous experience as a Commissioner has informed her that there is no room for bias and it’s well regulated. Jeff: While he understands what Ashley says, perception of conflict is hard to get through. Why risk the possibility?

Christine Dinsmore: To Jeff she said that she understands his commitment to diversity, but the Democratic party has not had a good record. As an older while male, why would you choose to run verses supporting a young person or a person of color? Jeff: My whole experience in the last ten years has been about stimulating diversity. He said he looks at each person as an individual, and always has.

Lanny Walter: Asked Ashley what her plans were for promoting diversity. Ashley: For starters, electing a woman would help. She said she has a long record of promoting diversity and would continue it. Making people feel welcome is the best way to promote diversity.

Katherine Smith: To Ashley: She appreciates all she does, but wonders whether endorsements from other Democrats creates a conflict of interest and wonders about her initiative to have the County Sheriff verify Jeremy Russell’s address. Ashley: Town Committees and elected officials are allowed to endorse. Re Jeremy Russell, it is quite a common process to verify candidates and was not personal or meant as intimidation.

Nejla Liias: For Jeff: Based on your experience of not doing small donations, what are your plans? Jeff replied that he has raised a lot of money for his school, working with non-profits, and individuals. But yes, he had a lot of large dollar donors.

Diedre Miller: To Jeff: What is your diversity policy for your school and how diverse is it, and what is your outreach to diverse communities? Jeff said he has worked with members of African American community to improve minority enrollment, and hired a person of color at the Sudbury School and it has African American teachers. For both: What is your policy for progressives, specifically Justice Democrats and what is your policy for inclusion? Ashley: Lots of praise for Justice Democrats and it’s something we must do. Jeff: AOC is my hero and we need to increase Justice Democrat presence. Learned at the Sudbury School that if you tell people they have a voice, they’ll be engaged and he will tell them that they have a voice.

**Motion to Endorse Claudia Andreassen:** Christine Dinsmore moved that the Committee endorse Claudia Andreassen for Town Judge. The motion was seconded by Margo McGilvrey and Katherine Smith. Christine then summarized Claudia’s background, her tenure as a Justice and length of time as a Democrat. After a difficult and spirited primary, she feels it’s time to come together. She added that Claudia won by a ratio of 3 to 1. Christine then cited the results in each Election District. For her, that tells Committee members what their voters want and it is incumbent upon us to follow their lead. Other discussion: Mike Harkavy asked that there be a request for a secret ballot, in accordance with our resolution. The Chair added that the committee is obliged by our policy to honor that request.

The Chair moved that the deadline to vote be extended until Thursday at 6pm. Rick Cousin seconded the motion. Nejla Liias asked about those who can’t vote by paper. It was agreed that they can vote by email exclusively to the Secretary. (The Secretary was asked to, and did, swear that the secrecy of individual votes would be maintained). The motion passed with one abstention. The deadline will be two days from tonight. Those wishing to vote by emailing the Secretary may do so.

**Coordinated Campaign for Antonio Delgado, Michelle Hinchey, Betsy Kraat and Claudia Andreassen:** Nejla Liias discussed measures noting that volunteers are desperately needed. The Committee can use Delgado’s platform for phoning and members can phonebank in their own EDs. We will do a mailer that goes out to all Saugerties Dems. The campaign needs someone on materials team and monthly newsletter authors. We are kicking off Saugerties phone banking next Tuesday. She then turned it over to Nate Munson (Delgado’s team). Noted 12 have committed to do phone banking but needs it in the 20s, 30s and 40s. She asked to put the link in the minutes ( <https://www.mobilize.us/delgadoforcongress/event/300469/> )for signing up for phone banking. Kathy added that the first phase will end in a couple of weeks. Another phase will be helping people complete their Absentee Ballots and send them in. Nate said it is important that we stick to our scheduled time to make calls. There will be opportunities to communicate by text for those who want to do it, later in the cycle.

Christine Dinsmore summarized several other ways members can be involved in the campaign. She also reminded members about the webinar with Ashley on September 10, how to fill out your Absentee Ballot so it doesn’t get challenged and thrown out and noted that it will be recorded for later use, if desired.

**Motion to Buy Yard Signs:** Mike Harkavy moved that the Committee purchase 30 Biden-Harris signs, seconded by Nancy Schaef. Discussion: The motion was modified that we spend $300. Joe Maloney: Betsy Kraat needs our help the most and we have a responsibility to the Assembly District. He also wondered if we could get a sign made with all candidates’ names on it. Mike Harkavy noted that Biden, Delgado and Hinchey will be pulling in votes for Betsy Kraat. The Chair then moved to table the motion, which was seconded and approved.

**Betsy Kraat Campaign:** Rick Cousin reported that her book drive netted about 1,000 books. He said Betsy will be on WKZE FM tomorrow. She is posting Letter to Editor training tomorrow at <https://www.facebook.com/events/218393072828447/> . Supporters can also donate and help her through the coordinated campaign.

**Report on School Opening:** Barbara Boyce relayed that the Superintendent said schools will open under remote learning until October 5 and will go into a hybrid model after that. The Saugerties School District website has a link discussing this plan.

**Early voting in Saugerties:** Early voting begins on October 24 and ends November 1. The Chair noted that once again, Saugerties is without a polling site, the nearest ones being Woodstock and Kingston. He continued that he has drafted a resolution to tell Tom Turco to stop suppressing the vote. Mike Harkavy moved to adopt the resolution. Margo McGilvrey seconded it and it passed unanimously.

**Town issues:** John Schoonmaker spoke about the Police Reform Task Force and said potential members are being interviewed during the past and next few weeks.

**Motion to Adjourn:** Moved by John Schoonmaker and seconded by Mike Harkavy and unanimously passed.

Respectfully Submitted: Bill Barr, Secretary