**Saugerties Democratic Committee**

January 26, 2021 Meeting Minutes

**ROLL CALL:**

Members Present: Aaron Levine, Barbara Boyce, Susan Breen, Brigid Walsh, Christine Dinsmore, Christine Via, Rick Cousin, Kathy Gordon, Kathleen Gray, Hélène Lesterlin, Joe Hinchey, Joe Maloney, John Schoonmaker, Kevin Freeman, Kathrine Smith, Lanny Walter, Nejla Liias, Louise Bloomfield, Matthew Maloney, Margo McGilvrey, Mike Harkavy, Michael Cimorelli, Pamela Ross, Marcus Arthur, Tim Scott and Bill Barr

Guest Presenters: David Gandin, Kevin Bryant, March Gallagher (Do you know if any potential associate members or anyone else was present? I would like us to list them as guests, esp. the Associates.)

**Approve Minutes from November 24, 2020 zoom meeting:** The Secretary moved that the minutes, as previously distributed be approved. Motion was seconded by Mike Harkavy and unanimously approved.

**Treasurer’s Report for January 26, 2021:** Amended and to be reported on at next meeting.

**Guest Speakers**

**Supreme Court Candidates**

**David Gandin, Esq:** He noted that we are at a time where the courts are our last bastion of maintaining our democracy. Many people are unaware of what Supreme Court does. He observed that the County Committee has an excellent program on the Courts and encouraged us to watch it. The Supreme Court is the highest trial court in NYS and has an incredibly diverse caseload, from tax disputes to criminal defense. How does a judge meet such a diverse demand? One does so by having excellent organizational skills and common sense. In addition, the judge must have a value that all are equal before the law and deserve dignity. How do you know if someone has compassion? Cited evidence from backgrounds. He said he is the Personal Attorney for a Supreme Court judge. As such, he has written hundreds of judgments. Mr. Gardiner is also on the Gardiner Democratic Committee and Adjunct at Marist College. The Chair asked about continuing on the Gardiner Committee and Mr. Gandin stated that he will need to resign if elected.

**Kevin Bryant, Esq:** Town of Ulster Committeeman and Esopus resident. Fortunate to have two seats available to us. He discussed the importance of the Supreme Court, having the largest and most expansive jurisdiction of any court in the state. He said these times have demonstrated the importance of the courts. All have seen disparities in how justice is dispensed. It is important that those appearing before judge are given equal treatment. He said the life experiences of the judge matter in understanding litigants’ needs. He comes from a broken family, and struggled in school but was fortunate to have good people supporting him. He worked his way through college. Following his education, he worked in Albany DA’s office and as a Public Defender, has practiced Insurance Defense and now has a private practice. Currently, he is the Corporation Counsel for City of Kingston. He has experience at all levels of the NYS Courts, has served on Character and Fitness Committee, and worked on the Attorney Grievance Committee to determine when attorneys should be disciplined.

**Ulster County Comptroller March Gallagher:**  Managing to conduct all responsibilities despite pandemic. Loves job and requests our support to continue. “Buckets” of responsibility explained. Claims audits, programs and financial “deep dive” audits: Collection of bed tax from Air B&Bs and County Jail (identified $700,000 in savings.) The Comptroller oversees the taxpayer checkbook, contract log, and is responsible for “daylighting” information. She claimed to have changed the tenor of the relationship between County Executive, Legislature and Comptroller’s office left from the previous Comptroller. She then gave examples working with the County Executive Office and County Legislature. Her office is working with less staff than normal due to pandemic but is managing to accomplish its mission. It will soon issue a racial equality snapshot and looking ahead, she plans to examine the financial responsibilities of being a watershed community; we need to put numbers on the impact of providing NYC water.

**Filling Committee Vacancies**

**Election District 9 (two vacancies)-** The nominees were as follows:

Nancy Schaef, nominated by Mike Harkavy, seconded by Barbara Boyce.

Nicole Roskos, nominated by Kathy Gordon, seconded by Aaron Levine.

Kenneth Kleinberg nominated by Christine Dinsmore, seconded by John Schoonmaker.

Deena Turner nominated by John Schoonmaker, seconded by Rick Cousin.

A Ranked Choice vote was conducted and Nancy Schaef and Nicole Roskos were elected to fill the two positions.

**Election District 11 (one vacancy)-**Nominees:

Robert Gelbach, nominated by Christine Dinsmore and seconded by Margo McGilvrey. Andrew Zink nominated by Rick Cousin and declined. The nomination was closed with only one nominee, a vote taken and Robert Gelbach was elected.

**Associate Committee Members-**Nominees were as follows:

Andrew Zink nominated by Rick Cousin, seconded by Christine Dinsmore

Finley Schaef nominated by Christine Dinsmore, seconded by Aaron Levine

Deena Turner nominated by John Schoonmaker, seconded by Nejla Liias

Kenneth Kleinberg nominated by Kathy Gordon, seconded by Margo McGilvrey

Deirdre Miller nominated by Nejla Liias, seconded by Christine Dinsmore

Liz Buono nominated by Nejla Liias, seconded by Kathy Gordon

Justine Tomkiell (formerly Gaukler) nominated by Christine Dinsmore, seconded by Pamela Ross

Michelle Grossbohlin nominated by Rick Cousin, seconded by Margo McGilvrey

Beth Weredyk nominated by Kathrin Smith, seconded by Matt Maloney

Lauren Ruberg nominated by Barbara Boyce, seconded by Margo McGilvrey

A secret ballot was cast and elected Associate Committee Members are Andrew Zink, Finley Schaef, Deena Turner, Kenneth Kleinberg, Deirdre Miller, Liz Buono, Justine Tomkiell, Michelle Grossbohlin and Lauren Ruberg. The Chair congratulated new members adding that Election District assignments for Associate Members will be established at the next monthly meeting.

**Community Happenings-keeping track**

**School District Update School opening developments/COVID**

**Village Issues:** Justine Tomkiell announced that she is running to become a Village Trustee. Her phone number is 518-603-4956 and Kathy Gordon volunteered to share her petition.

**Town issues:** John Schoonmaker said we are hiring Joule as administrator of the Community Energy Program. Hopefully operational this summer.

**Saugerties Police Reform & Reinvention Commission update:** Christine Dinsmore gave a report out from the Town Hall and feedback from recommendations are now being worked. Final Report will be available for 3rd Town Hall. The Community is really stepping up. Survey closes on Thursday.

**Quarryville emergency communication tower:** Mike Harkavy reported that there will be a meeting on this Feb 1st.

**County issues:** Nejla Liias pointed out that the County is reaching out to Green and Independent voters as part of outreach to see if they want to register as Democrats. Will be needing phone banking volunteers. John Schoonmaker added that the Ulster County Young Dems are hosting virtual pet show in March as a fundraiser.

**Standing Sub-committees: Recommended Chairs of each Standing Committee for the next 2-year term**

**Local Campaign Coordinating Committee-** Barbara Boyce.

**Search Committee-**Mike Harkavy

**Voter Data Committee-**Kathy Gordon

**Fundraising Committee-** Kathleen Grey pointed out that there is one but they have not elected a Chair.

**Program Committee-**Christine Dinsmore

Sue Breen moved to approve Sub-committee chairs, John Schoonmaker seconded it and the motion passed.

**Neighbor to Neighbor**: The Chair reported that Neighbor to Neighbor is still alive and percolating along, with Kevin Freeman in the leads. He added that its full implementation would be an asset to the Committee. He encouraged Members to contact Kevin or Amy Fradon who has responsibility at the County Committee for it for more information, if desired.

**Announcements:**

Nejla Liias pointed out that of Kayleigh Zaloga and Nina Schmidbaur were attending the meeting and we will be seeing more of them in the future. She added that Brigid Walsh has been appointed to the Town's Ethics Committee.

Christine Dinsmore has been appointed by the County Committee to develop a pipeline of attorneys that looks more like the people of the U.S. The goal is to encourage active Judges in the lower courts to consider running for the County Court and Supreme Court when a position opens.

Aaron Levine pointed out that the Ulster County Legislature, spearheaded by Chairman Donaldson, passed a resolution condemning the Insurrection at the Capitol and the Former President’s part in it; however, the resolution was signed by neither Mary Wawro or Al Bruno.

**February Meeting:** Aaron proposed that we move our February meeting to precede the County Convention and get information from the Search Committee. The Chair answered that the Search Committee has not concluded anything. He pointed out that the only contested county seat will be Legislative District 2. Information from the candidates in LD 2 can be sent out directly to our members in LD 2 without going through the process of scheduling a special meeting. Aaron asked that we place on our agenda for the February meeting a presentation by all Democrats vying for Town positions.

**Adjournment**: Motion to adjourn was made by Rick Cousin, seconded by Nejla Liias, and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted: Bill Barr, Secretary