



## Saugerties Democratic Committee February 22, 2022 Meeting Minutes (Zoom)

### **Roll Call**

The Secretary called roll and determined that a quorum was present:

*Voting Members:* Gilda Riccardi, Liz Buono, Kathy Gordon, Ken Kleinberg (Acting), Pam Ross, Bill Barr, Deena Turner, Justine Tomkiell, Skip Arthur, Christine Dinsmore, Nejla Liias, Michael Harkavy, Louise Bloomfield, Tim Scott, Sue Breen, Nancy Schaefer, Nicole Roskos, Brigid Walsh, Cara Stammler, Joe Maloney, Bob Gelbach, Kevin Freeman, Margo McGilvrey, Rick Cousin, Joe Hinchey, Anna Markowitz, Barbara Boyce, Lanny Walter, Aaron Levine

*Associate Members:* Andrew Zink, Finley Schaefer

*Guests:* Michael Ivino (Town Board), Fred Costello (Town Supervisor), Gerri Ryan, Kathleen Gray, Deon Hamer, Nina Schmidbaur

### **Approval of Minutes**

Justine Tomkiell moved to approve the Minutes of the January 25, 2022 meeting, seconded by Christine Dinsmore. The motion passed without objection.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Rick Cousin moved to approve the report below, seconded by Kevin Freeman. The motion passed without objection.

	<b>Actual</b>	
<b>Beginning Balance</b>		
25-Jan-22		\$2,854.80
<b>Income</b>		
ActBlue Donations	\$200.68	
<b>Total Income</b>		\$200.68
<b>Expenses</b>		
<b>Total Expenses</b>		\$0.00
<b>New Balance</b>		
22-Feb-22		\$3,055.48

### **Guest Presentations**

Mike Ivino addressed the December 2021 vote to opt out of **cannabis** retailing and consumption sites in the village. He noted the lack of guidance or any information about requirements from the state in advance of the vote and opined that the Town could likely revisit this issue later in this year. Among his concerns: state-level regulation that might not suit the Town; potential unknown operating costs to the Town. Fred Costello agreed that insufficient information was provided in the short time before the vote, yet voted to stay in partly because the Town's location offered good revenue prospects: Ulster, Woodstock and Catskill now may have better prospects for dispensaries because of earlier opt-in. He

pointed out that the Town is not insulated from any negative consequences (driving hazards, etc.) just because it has no dispensaries. The Village opted in by default, without voting, so a dispensary can in fact be located within the Town as of now. The Town Board consensus was to allow only dispensaries, not consumption lounges. Petitions to put the decisions on both to referendum were under review.

**Winston Farm** is the leading issue facing the Town Board this year. Fred noted that a study including community input about a vision for the property had been carried out in 2009. The Town Board will make a declaration of positive environmental impact that will trigger a SEQRA process and scoping. That is the time for local stakeholders to give input and voice concerns. During and after that process there will be public hearings on the requested zoning changes. The proposal may not survive the environmental review intact; whatever remains will be the basis for the zoning change considerations. Mike Ivino noted that the Board has already discussed some concerning environmental issues and that the developers have indicated they could be willing to “bend to the will of the Saugerties community.” The project is now being reviewed based on the Town Board’s input, and could change greatly from what is now on the developer website before a zoning law change is considered. A model of what would be allowed under current zoning will be produced as a basis for comparison with what is being sought.

#### **Petitioning for the Primary Ballot**

5% of Democrats registered in each ED must sign candidates’ petitions to qualify them for the ballot. The recommendation is to get more than the minimum required in case of challenges or mistakes. Committee candidates carry petitions for races at all levels. The county committee will give an instructional webinar on February 28.

#### **Election of First Vice Chair**

Joe Maloney requested the vote be confidential via OpaVote; the Chair approved the request. Bill Barr nominated Lanny Walter; the nomination was seconded by Barbara Boyce. Brigid Walsh nominated Kevin Freeman; the nomination was seconded by Justine Tomkiell. Several members noted the growth of the committee during Lanny’s tenure as Chair and its present strength—as evidenced by two such highly qualified candidates standing for election. By a vote of 18 to 10, Lanny Walter was elected.

#### **Proposed Bylaws Change**

The following proposed Bylaw amendment had been circulated prior to the meeting for discussion preparatory to a vote at the next meeting:

Article 5.

Section 5.03. Other Political Parties

*Officers, Members and Associate Members of the Saugerties Democratic Committee shall not publicly oppose, by word or financial contribution, the election of any Democratic Party nominee for office in New York State. Nor shall they actively participate in the workings of a non-Democratic political party with ballot access in a policy role, as an officer, in a leadership position, as part of its process for endorsing candidates, as part of its fundraising activities or in any conduct that creates the appearance of a conflict of interest with their Democratic Party position.*

Joe Maloney asked how this provision would be enforced if adopted. Lanny responded that if infringement amounts to disloyalty, a complaint could be brought to the County Committee's Ethics Commission. (Town Committees have no role in removing any of their members outside the County Committee process.) Nancy Schaefer suggested that the behavior described be explicitly identified as disloyalty to qualify as grounds for Removal [County Bylaws Section 1.09]. Nejla Liias reported that the County is developing a Code of Conduct that will likely include language similar to this. Liz Buono also recommended adding language regarding disloyalty to the amendment. Lanny noted that our Amendment as written fits squarely under Section 1.b. of the County Committee bylaws. Gilda Riccardi suggested that going forward committee members commit before they join to resigning from the SDC before undertaking any action that could be a perceived conflict of interest.

### **Endorsement Discussion**

*Assembly Candidate:* An endorsement vote could be held at our meeting on March 22, 2022. Both Sarahana Shrestha and Kevin Cahill have asked the SDC to endorse them. No SDC member has to carry either candidate's petition; because Kevin Cahill has the County committee's endorsement his petition will be part of the slate petition packets. Deena Turner suggested that, rather than endorse either candidate, the SDC could create a space for learning about both candidates--for example, by hosting a debate. This would enhance voter engagement, invigorate the primary process and connect voters to the SDC. Justine, Joe, Margo and Skip agreed. Christine mentioned that the Program Committee could organize such a debate.

*Town Justice:* Mike Harkavy reported that a public call for candidates will go out for the Town Justice election. The incumbent is Democrat Chris Kraft.

### **Strategy**

Nejla defined the Grow, Engage and Monitor strategy: Grow by reaching out to Dems we haven't connected with before; Engage to connect directly with town Democrats through Neighbor to Neighbor and in other ways; Monitor, staying on top of and reporting on what Town Board, County, state and federal officials are doing, so the Committee becomes a resource for the Town Democrats.

Getting involved in these areas is open to all Democrats, not just committee members. Kathy Gordon spoke about how important it is to reach out in a personal way to every town Democrat, inviting them to speak up and participate.

*Grow:* Cara and Justine are working on these social aspects, starting by getting the committee together and then bringing us together with the town. Louise Bloomfield has been reaching out to second homeowners in the area and invited anyone interested in this to contact her. Kathy noted that many youth do not immediately register with a party yet are consistent Dem voters and suggested reaching out to them.

*Engage:* Neighbor to Neighbor (N2N) door to door deep canvassing can now restart after Covid. Kevin reported that a core group (Kevin, Kathy, Margo, Bill, Lanny, Louise) has been contacting committee members about participating. The towns that did this in 2021 were the only ones in Ulster County where more Democrats than Republicans voted in the November election. It means really getting to know the Democrats in our community as individuals.

*Monitor:* We need a presence at Town and County government meetings regularly, and to connect with the offices of our state and federal representatives. Gilda will coordinate coverage of Town Board meetings; Lanny is coordinating County legislature coverage. Mike Harkavy noted a recent Committee

briefing by our County legislators Aaron Levine and Joe Maloney. Joe pointed to the County [legislative calendar](#) as a tool to plan meeting attendance, remote or in-person. Aaron is on the committee that allocates American Rescue Plan federal funds; Joe has introduced legislation to fund clean water projects including three in the Town of Saugerties.

Christine introduced the program committee, invited additional volunteers to join and hopes to plan in-person events again for 2022.

### **Website**

Rick presented the new website. Nancy suggested including information about the Town's election districts and who the officials are. The website already has a link to the state's election district look-up.

### **Other Business**

Nejla reported that the Committee internal communications will be moving to Slack, following the County's lead.

We would like to hold the next SDC monthly meeting in person offering remote attendance via Zoom. Kevin will meet with Fred to review the Senior Ctr equipment and technical requirements.

Justine raised the recent resignation letter that a former associate member had sent to several committee members besides the Executive Committee. The letter included inflammatory and unfounded content, some around race. Nejla noted that the Executive Committee was preparing a response. Christine suggested setting aside a time to talk as a committee about this, so we can agree on how to disagree without giving offense.

There being no other business, Justine moved to adjourn, seconded by Mike Harkavy. Without objection the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Louise Bloomfield, Secretary

---