



## Saugerties Democratic Committee

### February 15, 2023 Special Meeting Minutes

Zoom, 7:00pm

#### **Roll Call**

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

*Voting Members:* Gilda Riccardi, Liz Buono, Ken Kleinberg, Andrew Zink, Bill Barr, Justine Tomkiell, Deena Turner, Christine Dinsmore, Mike Harkavy, Nejla Lias, Kathy Gordon, Louise Bloomfield, Tim Scott, Nancy Schaefer, Nicole Roskos, Brigid Walsh, Joe Maloney, Bob Gelbach, Kevin Freeman, Sakinah Irizarry, Rick Cousin, Joe Hinchey, Lanny Walter, Aaron Levine

*Guests:* Keith Gurgui, Aimee Richter, Fred Costello, Leeanne Thornton, Mike Ivino, Stan O'Dell, Diane Colello, Dave Messina, Chris Allen, Nina Schmidbaur, Phyllis Clarke, Jimmy Mullen, Isabel Soffer

#### **Meeting Guidelines**

Chair Nejla Lias asked everyone to respect the meeting guidelines listed in the Agenda.

Mike Harkavy explained that member Skip Arthur is seriously ill in the hospital. The meeting observed 15 seconds of silence to send him thoughts energy for recovery.

#### **Saugerties County Legislature Candidates**

Nejla then welcomed the candidate speakers, giving each 5 minutes to speak and 5 minutes for questions.

Legislature District (LD) 1 candidate Aaron Levine and LD2 candidate Joe Maloney are both incumbents and current SDC members. They identified their Legislature committees and spoke about their legislative records and priorities. In LD3 candidate Keith Gurgui, a Town of Ulster resident and Ulster Democratic Committee member, is a first-time candidate. Keith's background is advocacy for independent living, disability rights and home health care workers. It covers a range of related issues that affect the general population: e.g., healthcare, wages, housing, worker rights. If he is elected, his legislative work will focus on priorities identified by the community.

#### **Saugerties Town Justice Candidate**

Candidate Aimee Richter spoke about her background as a practicing family law attorney. Her family first came to Saugerties in 2012 and has lived here fulltime since 2020. She noted her work on behalf of the town since moving to Saugerties, which includes a seat on the board of the Animal Shelter. She has long been an active Democratic party member in Brooklyn, where she has screened judicial candidates. The SDC Search Committee will interview her on Feb. 21.

#### **Endorsement for Town Candidates (except Town Justice)**

Kathy Gordon noted that several members have requested extending the vote deadline according to our Bylaws, until midnight on Feb. 17. She moved to extend the deadline to Friday, Feb. 17, seconded by Kevin Freeman. The motion passed. The ballots will go to all voting SDC members by email immediately following the meeting.

Nejla and Christine proposed that the nominations take place by office, so that members would vote only once for or against endorsing both Leeanne Thornton and Michael Ivino. Aaron Levine proposed postponing all endorsement to the next regular SDC meeting on Feb. 28. Nejla explained that Feb. 15 is the County Committee deadline to submit endorsed candidate names for petition preparation, and that the first day of petitioning is Feb. 28. Nejla, Bill Barr and Kathy Gordon explained that it is far easier for Committee members and candidates to use petitions prepared by the County Committee, with all endorsed Town candidates on a single petition. Liz Buono volunteered to prepare and print petitions for either Town Justice candidate should they win endorsement after the deadline.

Andrew Zink expressed that he did not feel the Committee had sufficient time to discuss the candidates before this vote, and requested more time for this in the future. Nejla encouraged members to reach out to the candidates independently, whether by phone or through meet-and-greets.

Nejla then called for nominations. Rick Cousin nominated Fred Costello for Town Supervisor, seconded by Joe Hinchey. Bill Barr made a motion to endorse Town Board candidates Leeanne Thornton and Michael Ivino as a slate, seconded by Christine Dinsmore. There were no other nominations for Town Board. The motion to endorse both Town Board candidates as a slate passed by a vote of 16 to 5. Nejla nominated Mike Ivino, seconded by Christine Dinsmore. Kathy Gordon nominated Leeanne Thornton, seconded by Nancy Schaefer. Mike Harkavy nominated Jill Zarcone for Tax Collector, seconded by Aaron Levine. As Jill Zarcone is not an enrolled Democrat, Mike Harkavy moved for a Wilson-Pakula waiver to allow her to appear on the Democratic ballot line, seconded by Kathy Gordon. The motion passed.

#### **Petition Process**

All members should carry petitions. Bill Barr and Justine Tomkiell volunteered to distribute them. Guest Diane Colello offered to help get signatures. The County Committee will hold a Zoom training Feb. 27.

#### **Committee Business and Discussion**

Nejla noted the upcoming District Attorney (DA) Forum Feb. 19 and the County Democratic Committee Convention Feb. 22, where County Executive, County DA and County Legislature candidates will be up for endorsement votes. A discussion of the DA race followed.

The Executive Committee proposed switching Joe Hinchey from representing ED14--which has been lost in redistricting--to represent ED3, where he resides. Liz Buono moved for this switch, seconded by Justine Tomkiell. The motion passed.

#### **Memorial for Pam Ross**

Nancy Schaefer proposed putting a memorial bench in the Meadow of the Esopus Creek Preserve, in honor of Pam and her longtime work on the Board of the Esopus Creek Conservancy.

There being no other business, Kevin Freeman moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mike Harkavy. The motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 8:58pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Louise Bloomfield, Secretary

[APPENDIX]

Results of the Town candidates' endorsement vote, announced February 18: The Saugerties Democratic Committee endorsed candidates Fred Costello, for Town Supervisor (25 votes); Leeanne Thornton and Michael Ivino, for Town Board (22 votes); and Jill Zarccone, for Tax Collector (25 votes).

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