



Saugerties Democratic Committee

November 28, 2023 Monthly Meeting Minutes

Senior Center, 7:00 pm

Roll Call

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

Voting Members: Gilda Riccardi, Liz Buono, Andrew Zink, Bill Barr, Sakinah Irizarry, Christine Dinsmore, Skip Arthur, Mike Harkavy, Nejla Liias, Kathy Gordon, Louise Bloomfield, Kevin Freeman, Anna Markowitz, Lanny Walter, Aaron Levine

Guests: Chris Allen, Fred Hirsch, Nina Schmidbaur, Leeanne Thornton

Approval of Minutes

Bill Barr moved to approve the Minutes of the September 26, 2023 SDC meeting, seconded by Gilda Riccardi. The motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

	Actual	
Beginning Balance		
24-Oct-23		\$2,859.55
Income		
ActBlue Donations SDC	120.02	
Town Refund	265.00	
Meeting Collection	86.00	
Total Income		\$471.02
Expenses		
Check 443 K. Gordon (Postage)	(204.00)	
Zoom CC Payment	(15.99)	
Total Expenses		(\$219.99)
New Balance		
28-Nov-23		\$3,110.58

Liz Buono moved to approve the Treasurer's Report, seconded by Christine Dinsmore.

Chair Nejla Liias welcomed guests.

Election Reflections

Mike Harkavy and Liz Buono spoke about the canvassing operation and thanked all the volunteers. Though the number was small, several volunteers canvassed multiple turfs over several weeks of the campaign—notably committee members Rick Cousin and Lanny Walter. Candidates Keith Gurgui, Leeanne Thornton and Aimee Richter were strong canvassers.

Louise Bloomfield reported on the phonebanking that had been led by Nicole Roskos and Andy Cowan, and thanked the volunteer team. Kathy Gordon noted that the County's provision of postcards—which were handwritten and mailed by volunteers--allowed us to reach many of our targeted voters for whom no phone information was available. Kathy also noted that both Dem Town Board candidates won solidly according to still-unofficial results, and that Leeanne Thornton had beaten their Republican opponent by 900 votes.

Skip Arthur reviewed the Letters to the Editor (LTE) campaign, noting that only Hudson Valley One now accepts letters for or against candidates. Christine stressed that LTEs can be helpful to Dem readers by giving specific talking points they can use; e.g., information on Congressional/state representatives' specific votes and voting records.

Both state and both county ballot propositions passed; the town proposition to make the Receiver of Taxes an appointed position lost heavily. While this could be because people generally resist losing a right to vote, more consistent attention and messaging about ballot propositions in general could affect the outcome of future propositions.

Committee Business

Looking Ahead to 2024: Arguments are currently being heard on the redistricting appeal.

Nejla reported that the County Dem Committee is looking for delegates to the Democratic Convention, in Chicago in June.

Christine Dinsmore suggested the Committee consider holding a Town Hall featuring County Sheriff Figueroa that might both attract Dems and raise awareness of the SDC. This was to be decided at a future Committee meeting.

Town Committee Membership: Mike Harkavy announced his resignation from the Committee effective November 30. He stressed that he will remain engaged on behalf of Democratic values. He urged young people to consider running for the Committee, and noted that he and Lanny are its longest-standing current members. Nejla urged current members to inform the Executive Committee in writing as soon as possible whether they plan to run for re-election in 2024. Lanny and Nejla stressed that the core function of committee members is to recruit and support candidates and do the grassroots work to get them elected.

Bench in Memory of Pam Ross: A dedication ceremony will be held in spring 2024. The bench will be sited so as to pair with the identical bench donated by Esopus Creek Conservancy.

December 2023 SDC Meeting: Nejla moved to move the Committee meeting originally scheduled for Dec. 12 to Dec 19 at 7pm, seconded by Louise. The motion passed; an announcement will be made as soon as a location is set.

Community Updates

Village: Alex Wade passed away; his loss will be deeply felt in the village.

The Village housing inspector wants to propose to the Board to bring in a planner to review village zoning. Bill noted that the County provides a free review to its Housing Smart communities (which include the town but not the village).

Town: Leeanne Thornton noted that 5 candidates for police chief will be interviewed next week, of whom one is internal. A second hearing on public signs will be held Dec. 5.

Schools: The Cahill principal is moving to a different job in the district. The High School principal is leaving; Sakinah Irizarry is on the panel interviewing for a successor.

County: Aaron Levine reported that he proposed a County budget amendment to increase the Board of Elections staff salaries by 5%, which the BOE had sought but was not included proposed budget. It will be voted on by the Ways & Means Committee. There will be a special session to pass the budget Dec. 6.

Ulster County Democratic Committee: Lanny reported that the Bylaws subcommittee has completed its analysis and that is being forwarded to the UCDC Executive Committee for review.

Christmas Wishes Ulster County: Liz Buono described the work of this organization, of which she is a board member. She invited all present to join in providing personalized gifts for needy families, by volunteering and/or donating. The Committee elected to collect a donation on the spot to contribute to the charity, to be used as Liz thinks best.

There being no other business, Gilda Riccardi moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mike Harkavy. The meeting was adjourned at 8:55pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise Bloomfield, Secretary
