



Saugerties Democratic Committee

January 23 (Zoom) and January 30, 2024 (in person) Monthly Meeting Minutes

Part I—January 23, 2024, 7:00 pm, Zoom

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, Deena Rae Turner, Sakinah Irizarry, Christine Dinsmore, Nejla Liias, Kathy Gordon, Louise Bloomfield, Nancy Schaefer, Nicole Roskos, Joseph Maloney, Bob Gelbach, Kevin Freeman, Margo McGilvrey, Rick Cousin, Andy Cowan, Lanny Walter, Aaron Levine

Guests: Kelleigh McKenzie, Alexis Reinhold, Aimee Richter, Molly Mackaman, Keri Savona, Sarahana Shrestha, Gabriella Madden, Jerry Cohen, Ken Germano, Brittany Barnard, Nina Schmidbaur, Chris Allen, Ken Goldberg, John Dashman, Lisa Nicholas; Dylan Murphy

Approval of Minutes

Bill Barr moved to approve the Minutes of the meetings held on November 28 and December 19, 2023, seconded by Skip Arthur. The motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

Christine Dinsmore moved to approve the January 23 Treasurer's report, seconded by Kevin Freeman. The motion passed.

	Actual		Pending
Beginning Balance			
28-Nov-23	\$3,110.58		
Income			
ActBlue Donations SDC	320.84		
Meeting Collection	74.00		
Total Income	\$394.84		
Expenses			
Check 444 M. Arthur (Bench)	(43.01)	Check 447 K Gordon (Ltrhd)	(313.20)
Check 445 ECC (Bench)	(172.50)		
Check 446 M McGilvrey (Fundraiser)	(59.65)		
Zoom CC Payment	(31.98)		
Total Expenses	(\$307.14)		
New Balance			
23-Jan-24	\$3,198.28		\$2,885.08

Guests Welcome

Chair Nejla Liias welcomed guests and asked newcomers Molly Mackaman, Alexis Reinhold, Roberta Keogan, and Ann O'Brien to introduce themselves.

County Committee Update

Kelleigh McKenzie, Chair of the Ulster County Democratic Committee, noted that county Democrats have reason to be happy about the 2023 election result, with a win for Manny Nneji and a solid majority in the Legislature. Ulster County had the second-highest Democratic turnout in the state. She outlined the three cornerstones of the 2024 election strategy: overperforming on Democratic base turnout, using comprehensive county campaign support materials and volunteer coordination; helping town committees pave the way for the 2025 elections, through training and peer-to-peer support; and building digital infrastructure. She described the upcoming amendments to the County Committee bylaws, to be voted on at the February 21 Convention. A detailed bylaws briefing committee meeting will be held the evening of February 5.

Candidate Visits

Ulster County Family Court Judge: **Keri Savona**, the sitting Family Court judge, spoke about her background, experience and priorities should she be re-elected.

State Assembly Member, District 103: **Gabriella Madden** introduced herself and explained why she is challenging incumbent Sarahana Shrestha. She took questions and then left the meeting.

Assemblymember **Sarahana Shrestha** then addressed the meeting, outlining her priorities for the new legislative session and her plan to campaign toward the general election.

The Chair noted that incumbent State Senator **Michelle Hinchey** had submitted a statement of candidacy and is requesting county committee endorsement but could not join the meeting.

2024 Strategy and SDC Slate

Nejla thanked those guests and committee members who had attended the December 19, 2023 Special Meeting. She shared the attendees' response to the surveys distributed at that meeting and invited further input. She stressed the value of inclusion and the "big tent" to focus on what unites us as Democrats. She will share a Google document and photos of the actual survey results boards. Being able to talk informally at a meeting alongside the structured exercise worked well. Every effort will be made to find fully accessible spaces for future in-person meetings that are held outside the Senior Center.

Nejla then summarized the town committee organization process that takes place every two years. Several documents are available to current and prospective describing the responsibilities of committee members and including the committee Bylaws. There are 30 voting member spaces open, two for each of the town's 15 election districts. There are also up to two nonvoting associate membership spaces for each election district. (Associate members may vote in the absence of a voting member.)

The Executive Committee has collected current members' intentions regarding the new term, and compiled a list of nonmembers who are interested. There are 32 candidates thus far, and more may present themselves after this meeting. Nejla announced an in-person continuation of this meeting, to be

held Tuesday, January 30, at 6:00 pm at the Senior Center. [The coming storm and associated Weather Advisory had necessitated moving the present portion of the meeting to Zoom.]

Nejla clarified that current committee members will be voting at this year’s County Convention and also on the proposed town committee slate for the 2024-2026 term. If more than two candidates run in a specific election district, the primary election will decide the winners.

Community Updates

Molly Mackaman has been organizing a letter-writing campaign urging a ceasefire in Gaza and is hosting letter-writing sessions. The Committee has received mail on this issue urging it to take a stand. Kathy Gordon has a proposed resolution that she would like to discuss. Lanny Walter proposed that Kathy circulate the resolution. Bob Gelbach enthusiastically supports such a resolution and would be happy to work on finalizing it. He suggests conveying that we would like to be able to support our elected officials’ positions on this issue. Joe Maloney suggested reaching out to Rep. Pat Ryan.

Sakinah circulated a Strategic Planning Survey from the School District.

There being no other business for this part of the meeting, Lanny Walter moved for adjournment, seconded by Kevin Freeman and the Zoom portion of the meeting adjourned at 9:06 pm.

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Part II—January 30, 2024, 6:00 pm, Senior Center

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, Deena Rae Turner, Christine Dinsmore, Skip Arthur, Nejla Lias, Kathy Gordon, Louise Bloomfield, Nancy Schaefer, Nicole Roskos, Brigid Walsh, Barbara Boyce, Joe Maloney, Kevin Freeman, Margo McGilvrey, Rick Cousin, Anna Markowitz, Andy Cowan, Lanny Walter, Aaron Levine

Guests: Chris Allen, Brittany Barnard, Ken Germano, Teresa Giordano, Molly Mackaman, Nina Schmidbauer, John Schoonmaker, Beth Weredyk

Community Update

Kevin Freeman and the committee expressed our sorrow over the tragic death of Starllie Swonyoung, a dedicated young Democratic volunteer killed in a hit-and-run traffic accident while walking along Route 9W on January 10.

Saugerties Democratic Committee Slate, 2024-2026

Chair Nejla Lias summarized the process of building the slate. The Executive Committee determined current members’ interest in running for re-election; recruited new prospective candidates through public notices and among existing volunteers; held discussions with interested Saugerties Democrats; compiled and distributed backgrounders on those who wish to run for Committee seats, for current members’ consideration; sent a survey to current members listing 34 potential candidates; and developed the proposed slate of 30 candidates based on the results of that survey along with other

factors. The proposed slate was circulated to members and guests for discussion before a members' vote on approval. Nejla noted the high proportion of current Committee members who responded to the survey.

Kathy Gordon moved to approve the proposed slate, seconded by Lanny Walter and Rick Cousin.

Nejla then invited newcomers to the slate to speak about their interest in serving on the Committee. Ken Germano prioritizes service to the community. Molly Mackaman emphasizes healing divisions within the community. Nancy Schaefer warmly recommended volunteer and new candidate Steve Charney.

The current town committee can approve but not formally endorse the final slate, which will be presented for approval to the full Ulster County Democratic Committee at its Convention on February 21.

There was a range of opinion about elected government officials serving as committee members. Christine Dinsmore noted that her survey votes did not include any currently serving elected officials. Nejla agreed to circulate the numerical results of the survey [later circulated as Confidential information to current committee members only].

A vote was then held on the motion to approve the slate as circulated. The motion passed by 20 votes to 1 opposed, with two abstentions.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise Bloomfield, Secretary

[Approved Saugerties Democratic Committee Slate for 2024-2026 term appended as separate document]