



## Saugerties Democratic Committee March 28, 2023 Monthly Meeting Minutes Senior Center, 7:00pm

### **Roll Call**

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

*Voting Members:* Ken Kleinberg, Andrew Zink, Bill Barr, Deena Turner, Christine Dinsmore, Mike Harkavy, Nejla Lias, Kathy Gordon, Louise Bloomfield, Tim Scott, Nancy Schaefer, Nicole Roskos, Barbara Boyce, Bob Gelbach, Joe Maloney, Kevin Freeman, Sakinah Irizarry, Margo McGilvrey, Ruck Cousin, Lanny Walter, Aaron Levine

*Guests:* Fred Costello, Leeanne Thornton, Chris Allen, Kathleen Gray, Mike MacIsaac, John Stegmayer

### **Approval of Minutes**

Barbara Boyce moved to approve the previously circulated Minutes of the meeting held on February 28, 2023, seconded by Christine Dinsmore. The motion passed.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Bill Barr moved to approve the report, seconded by Lanny Walter. The motion passed.

#### **SDC TREASURER REPORT MARCH 2023**

	<b>Actual</b>	
<b>Beginning Balance</b>		
	28-Feb-23	\$2,508.02
<b>Income</b>		
ActBlue Donations (Recurring)	134.42	
<b>Total Income</b>		\$134.42
<b>Expenses</b>		
OpaVote	(10.00)	
Zoom CC Payment	(15.99)	
<b>Total Expenses</b>		(\$25.99)
<b>New Balance</b>		
	28-Mar-23	\$2,616.45

## **Review of Petition Process**

Bill, the petition coordinator, reported that the petitioning started slowly but finished strongly, and that we exceeded all the required threshold numbers of signatures. He requested that in future years members should either pick up their petitions as soon as they are available, or call ahead to the petition coordinator to arrange a pickup. In Bill's absence, Kathy Gordon had collected and reviewed the petitions at the end of the process. She reported a few errors on petitions—a common mistake was numbering petition pages, which the signature collectors should not do.

Ken Kleinberg suggested that we **publicize the petition drive in advance**, via email to our list and each member in their election district (ED). The 2024 petition drive will include collecting signatures for the Committee member candidates. Nancy Schaefer noted that many phone numbers provided on the voter lists have been disconnected. Lanny Walter suggested that by organizing in advance, **members and/or volunteers could petition for the members who are not able to collect signatures**. Joe Maloney suggested having a **signature drive in a public place and promoting it in advance**--in addition to members petitioning individually in their EDs early in the election year. It's important to preserve the ability to reach out direct to neighbors this way at the start of the year (Mike Harkavy, Lanny). A "petition party" on the last weekend before the deadline could also give out registration forms as needed. We will need to ensure enough petition copies are available for every ED. Kathy emphasized **the advantage of using MiniVAN**—which the County provided for the first time this year. It will allow us to return to voters who signed later this year, and for signatures in future years.

## **Endorsement Process and Policies**

Leeanne Thornton reported that several voters told her they had already signed petitions for Paul Andreassen, carried by Claudia. Not all who signed it understood what office Paul was running for—or that having signed it, they could not then sign Leeanne's for our Town candidates. Nejla clarified that Claudia Andreassen is not a SDC member.

Christine and others think that SDC members should not offer petitions for candidates running against the Committee's endorsed candidates.

Joe Maloney noted that if that were our policy, it could prevent a primary taking place, removing voters' ability to determine the outcome. Bill clarified that the SDC gave out petitions only for Aimee Richter unless someone requested a petition for Stan O'Dell. Nancy Schaefer suggested that members who wished to petition against endorsed candidates should resign from the SDC--not supporting the endorsed candidate is disrespectful to the SDC. Louise Bloomfield said she considers it a service to voters who might not otherwise be able to sign petitions to offer them at the door for both candidates, while explaining which candidate is endorsed and why. Joe proposed not endorsing at all but introducing all candidates. Rick Cousin noted how important it is that we engage voters at the door just to tell them that an election is taking place, as well as being clear about whom we endorse.

Sakinah Irizarry is in favor of Committee members petitioning only for endorsed candidates; the SDC's vetting is of value to voters, who have no opportunity to do it for themselves. To present another candidate undercuts the value of the community. Joe cautioned against potentially alienating voters by not presenting petitions for the candidates of their choice.

Mike Harkavy proposed that the **Search Committee focus on candidate recruitment and education, and bring all candidates to a forum of the full SDC**, where we see all of them at one time. This year the committee did not have enough time to hear from the candidates.

Nejla noted the difference between a contested and a noncontested race. **Some Committee members did not carry for the endorsed Town Board candidates**, even though no one else had sought our endorsement against any of them.

Lanny Walter is not in favor of barring SDC members from supporting their preferred candidate before the primary. The County Bylaws subcommittee has not yet addressed this issue at Town level. **Bill proposed that supporting an unendorsed candidate should be allowed as long the petitioner clearly states that the Committee has endorsed a different candidate.** Kathy noted that the **County Committee is preparing significant resources—in advance of the primary—that are only available to endorsed candidates.** If we make no endorsement, our candidate has no access to those resources. Joe questioned what an endorsement implies in terms of specific ways the SDC will support its candidate. Deena Turner is not in favor of endorsing a candidate in a primary and favors a candidate debate. Bill noted that one candidate in this primary had decided not to run without endorsement, reluctant to primary someone who had won endorsement. Thus our endorsement ensured a primary. Kevin Freeman said he carried for both candidates and profiled both candidates: People signed 2-to-1 for Aimee. Tim Scott explained that he does not support Mike Ivino and did not carry or sign the Town candidates' petition for that reason. Margo McGilvrey noted that we need to understand what candidates would forgo by way of County support if we decide not to endorse before the primary.

Nejla then asked the candidates their opinion of the process. Fred Costello supports endorsement as a significant candidate support and also noted that the Committee represents the candidates for voters they might not otherwise have any contact with. He spoke of the **importance of early endorsement, noting that in 2021 at least one Town Board seat could have been gained had the Democratic and Working Families parties aligned candidates.** Leeanne emphasized the collaborative, energizing aspect of being endorsed **and supported Kevin's model for petitioning and encouraging voters to educate themselves.**

There is a consensus that our process needs more time and space to evaluate and introduce candidates before endorsement. Our candidates can also call voters. Nejla spoke to **recruiting candidates very early for 2024 against two Republicans on the Town Board. There was conversation about coordination with the Working Families Party** which will require an earlier candidate recruitment.

### **Neighbor to Neighbor**

Christine spoke about relationship building and the importance of measurable turnout increase through the process, hence the focus on a specific election district. Members are welcome to take this approach in their districts also to the extent that they can.

### **In Person v. Hybrid Meetings**

In person preferred, though some are still worried about Covid.

### **Updates**

Kathy reported that Election District 8 (Glasco) now has more Dems than any other party enrollment. Fred noted the recent housing expansion in that area.

### **Vacancy Filling**

Nejla reported that there is one vacancy, in ED8, that will either be filled later this year or left open for petitioning for the SDC in 2024.

### **Town Updates**

Louise reported that Rep. Marc Molinaro will headline the County Chamber of Commerce Breakfast April 12 at the Diamond Mills Hotel.

Fred reported on the Molinaro's town hall meeting earlier this month. Bill noted one Republican at the meeting who had ended up agreeing with the Democrats speaking there.

Kevin noted many vacancies on the (volunteer) town committees and encouraged Dems to get involved. A list of them is available on the town government website.

Leeanne reported on a conversation with Skip Arthur, who may be discharged soon to return home where he will need help.

### **Village Updates**

The SDC congratulated Andrew Zink on his election to the Village Board with the highest number of votes. Andrew noted his deep record of volunteer work since moving to the town.

### **County Updates**

Joe noted his resolution to increase the county tax rate to 4% on short-term rentals and hotels, which has been forwarded to Sarahana Shrestha and Michelle Hinchey for consideration by the state Legislature.

Tracy Bartels and Joe sponsored a recent resolution that will clarify the identity of property owners now only listed as LLCs. The state comptroller is now auditing the county's finances.

Aaron Levine noted a new director of UCAT. A Legislature committee meeting on public transportation will take place at the Senior Center March 30. An appropriation of ARPA funds to replace the Malden Turnpike culvert passed, with a closure of Malden Turnpike east of the Thruway to begin April 3.

There being no other business Margo McGilvrey moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Andrew Zink, and the meeting adjourned at 9:12pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise Bloomfield, Secretary

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