



## Saugerties Democratic Committee July 25, 2023 Monthly Meeting Minutes Senior Center, 7:00pm

### **Roll Call**

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

*Voting Members:* Gilda Riccardi, Ken Kleinberg, Bill Barr, Deena Turner, Sakinah Irizarry, Christine Dinsmore, Skip Arthur, Mike Harkavy, Nejla Liias, Kathy Gordon, Louise Bloomfield, Nancy Schaef, Barbara Boyce, Bob Gelbach, Kevin Freeman, Margo McGilvrey, Rick Cousin, Anna Markowitz, Lanny Walter, Aaron Levine

*Guests:* Sarahana Shrestha, Teddy Artschwager, Fred Costello, Leeanne Thornton, Mike Ivino, Aimee Richter, Chris Allen, Brittany Barnard, Daniel Gilhuly, John Schoonmaker

### **Approval of Minutes**

Kevin Freeman moved to approve the draft Minutes of the June 20, 2023 meeting, seconded by Bob Gelbach. The motion passed.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Margo McGilvrey moved to approve the Treasurer's Report, seconded by Rick Cousin. The motion passed.

	<b>Actual</b>	
<b>Beginning Balance</b>		
20-Jun-23		\$2,173.97
<b>Income</b>		
ActBlue Donations	100.82	
Meeting Collection	140.00	
<b>Total Income</b>		\$240.82
<b>Expenses</b>		
Check 299 New Dems Ltr	(213.09)	
Check 300 Manny Nneji Cmpgn	(100.00)	
Zoom CC Payment	(15.99)	
<b>Total Expenses</b>		(\$329.08)
<b>New Balance</b>		
24-Jul-23		\$2,085.71

### **NY Assembly Member Sarahana Shrestha**

Sarahana Shrestha reported on her first year representing AD 103. This year's budget's most contentious issues include criminal justice reform, housing and climate change. Major differences within the

Democratic caucus slowed negotiations, particularly on affordable housing legislation, with the real estate lobby wielding a lot of influence. The industry would sooner build fewer houses than build more houses with affordability requirements and tenant protections. On climate change, more of a consensus is building, especially in the face of weather conditions around the world this summer. The Build Public Renewables Act that passed both houses was the result of years of organizing, and the passage of the federal Inflation Reduction Act gave it impetus. The final state legislation has the best labor protection in the country for the renewables industry.

Next year the New York Health Act will come up again. She will be organizing around this bill. In this area the leaders of the Senate and Assembly are both aligned toward the progressives in their houses. Other bills she will champion will further regulate Central Hudson and hold it accountable: one would increase the penalties if they're found guilty of wrongdoing, and the other would forbid them charging late fees while they're under investigation. She also will support a mental-health courts bill, to prevent people being jailed instead of sent for needed treatment.

On criminal justice, many Democrats including the governor were unnerved by the universal rightwing backlash against the bail reforms as originally passed. On home health care worker pay, not enough of a raise was passed because the progressive measure to raise the needed revenue ("tax the rich") did not pass. On public transport, she thinks it will require the state equivalent of the Inflation Reduction Act to really address our dependence on private cars. The final higher education legislation was a vast improvement over the originally proposed version because both houses of the legislature were aligned on the changes needed. She and Michelle Hinchey in the Senate carried the legislation that approved Ulster County's short-term occupancy bed tax increase from 2% to 4%. Many on the Committee expressed their thanks for her dedication, hard work and clear summation of what got done and what lies ahead.

### **County Elections**

Evan Holland-Shepler, Manny Nneji's campaign manager, spoke about Manny's campaign for District Attorney and appealed both for financial support and for volunteers. He will coordinate a series of Meet-and Greet events for Manny throughout the county. Phone banking, canvass and meet-and-greet events will all take place in Saugerties next month.

Louise Bloomfield moved to donate \$150 to Manny's campaign from the SDC, for a total contribution of \$250 (including \$100 previously approved by the Executive Committee before a filing deadline). The motion was seconded by Rick Cousin and passed unopposed.

### **Town Elections**

Chair Nejla Liias thanked the Committee for their efforts in the primary election. For the November campaign, Mike Harkavy and Liz Buono will be coordinate canvassing. A canvassing flyer customized for Saugerties will be provided by the County, featuring all candidates and giving voter information. We need further volunteers to coordinate other operations. Coordinated canvassing will start Sept.23. There are a couple of possibilities for centrally located spaces to be investigated.

Town candidates will receive funding request forms. They should be filled out and returned to the Chair and the SDC email box in time for the Committee to vote at its August meeting.

The Town Board and Supervisor campaign budget includes a mailing, print ads and Facebook ads. They will hold a fundraiser in early to mid-October.

An SDC local campaign subcommittee exists per our bylaws. Committee members should consider coming forward for this.

On the GOP side, Al Bruno and Ryan Arold are Town Board candidates. George Heidcamp and another candidate are running for those seats on the Conservative line. Stan O'Dell is the Republican candidate for Town Justice; Gaetana Ciarlante is the Conservative candidate.

Nejla Liias reported that Governor Hochul will likely sign a bill to move local elections from their current off-year cycle to take place in even-numbered years with the statewide and federal elections. The Republican members of County Legislature have put in a memorializing resolution opposing this, which likely is part of a statewide GOP effort.

### **SDC Fall Fundraiser**

This will take place Thursday, September 14, 6:00-8:30pm at Cantine Pavilion, catered by Stone Pony. There will be music. The ticket price will be \$35; food will cost \$18/head; additional expenses are budgeted at \$450 total. The musicians will be the same as last year; the sound designer will be new. Speakers will be heard before the band begins to play. Volunteers are needed to set up, serve and tear down. Bob Gelbach moved to accept the budget, seconded by Christine Dinsmore. The motion passed.

### **Dual Residents**

Louise reported that the County mailings are in progress for each town.

### **Bench for Pam**

Skip reported that the Aldo Leopold bench has been selected. Bill Barr wants to work on the bench. Nancy Schaefer suggested a ceremony for its installation, which was agreed.

### **Town Updates**

Fred Costello reported that there has been much more positive response this year to Community Choice Aggregation this year than before. The pickleball court surface is down. The dog park opening has been delayed but should still happen this year. Steps are being taken to address the personnel situation in the police department after the attorney general's report, which suggested an officer's termination but did not waive the process requirements that are in place. More than \$2 million has been raised for the animal shelter; bids are coming in. The town was awarded a DEC grant to replace the children's ice rink; the new cooling system will both save money and reduce the carbon footprint. The affordable housing project on Spaulding Lane will come back before the Town Board; the outstanding issue is traffic.

### **Community Updates**

Nejla reviewed upcoming events: the Democracy Party in the Park July 28; the Democracy Tent at the Ulster County Fair August 1-6; the Caribbean Festival August 12; and the Ulster County Democratic Committee Fundraiser Sept. 28.

**Legislative Updates**

Aaron Levine reported that the new voting machines purchase has been approved and that the chosen machines will be much easier to use. There are two open seats on the board of the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency (UCRRA), for which Aaron and Joe are among the legislators conducting interviews.

**State Updates**

The outcome of the state’s Congressional redistricting lawsuit may not be known until later this year or 2024.

**School District Updates**

Sakinah Irizarry reported that Daniel Erceg has been appointed superintendent. SROs will be armed--on the basis of a survey that went to the school community on the Friday of Memorial Day weekend, and got only 331 responses, of which 70% favored arming them.

**Announcement**

The next meeting of the SDC will take place Tuesday, August 29, at 7pm at the Senior Center— rescheduled from August 22.

There being no other business, Christine Dinsmore moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Rick Cousin, and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise Bloomfield, Secretary

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