



Saugerties Democratic Committee October 24, 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, Christine Dinsmore, Skip Arthur, Mike Harkavy, Nejla Liias, Kathy Gordon, Louise Bloomfield, Nancy Schaef, Nicole Roskos, Bob Gelbach, Kevin Freeman, Margo McGilvrey, Rick Cousin, Aaron Levine

Guests: County Executive Jen Metzger, Chris Allen, Ian Byrne, Andy Cowan, Theresa Giordano, Lauren Ruberg, Nina Schmidbaur

Approval of Minutes

Mike Harkavy moved to approve the Minutes of the September 26, 2023 SDC meeting, seconded by Kevin Freeman. The motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

Christine Dinsmore moved to approve the Treasurer's Report presented by Bill Barr, seconded by Rick Cousin. The motion passed.

	Actual	
Beginning Balance		
	26-Sep-23	\$4,193.00
Income		
ActBlue Donations SDC	158.44	
ActBlue D&DfD	629.10	
Meeting Collection	95.00	
Total Income		\$882.54
Expenses		
Check 312 Friends of Leeanne	(250.00)	
Check 313 Costello for Supervisor	(500.00)	
Check 314 Costello (Ivino)	(500.00)	
Check 315 Friends of Mannie	(250.00)	
Check 441 Friends of Aimee	(250.00)	
Check 442 Keith Gurgui for Ulster	(250.00)	
Zoom CC Payment	(15.99)	
Cash W/d for Catering Tip	(200.00)	
Total Expenses		(\$2,215.99)

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New Balance

24-Oct-23

\$2,859.55

Chair Nejla Liias welcomed guests and introduced County Executive Jen Metzger.

County Executive Jen Metzger

Jen outlined her top priorities—among them building a sustainable, resilient climate change program, addressing the crises in housing and mental health, and workforce development.

Addressing climate change: Jen issued an Executive Order directing all county operations to source energy from renewable resources and to implement green purchasing as much as possible. A big focus is connecting communities that have been left behind with state and federal programs that can help them transition to renewable energy sources (heat pumps), and/or provide income-based assistance with energy bills. This will improve air quality and reduce environmental impact. Waste management is also a big issue.

Working with the Legislature she founded the UC Climate Corps, a diverse group of mostly young people who participate in paid summer internships to advance climate-smart pilot projects in a variety of county government departments (e.g., tourism, economic development, purchasing, emergency services). She intends to expand and broaden the program next year.

Emergency housing: There is greater demand than ever for emergency housing, and people are staying in emergency housing much longer than before—the average time has risen from 3 to 20 months. More than half of the demand is from the Kingston area. The Rodeway just reopened under a new name after the owner made improvements; the County worked with departments including UCAT and the Sheriff’s office to provide their services. Only families will be placed there.

Affordable housing: Jen noted that Saugerties Village is not a member of Housing Smart Communities, though the town has signed on. Zoning is one of the biggest constraints on building affordable housing; while the county doesn’t control that, it can support municipal governments in making changes.

Mental health: Every school district in the county is now taking advantage of a pilot program launched this year program to supplement the school mental health counselors with other mental health professionals. The budget for next year will include expanding the program. The County recently bought a building in Kingston to serve as a wellness and health center; the first floor will be a 24/7 crisis stabilization center.

Workforce development and training: The County has been working with education institutions (Ulster BOCES, SUNY New Paltz, SUNY Ulster) to create a model of collaboration at ipark, tailoring training to what employers are looking for. A big focus is to reach out to disadvantaged

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communities and lower barriers to participation, e.g., by providing free transport and onsite childcare. The county has also been working with the Sheriff and the carpenters union to offer free career training to those in jail, and apprenticeship programs in any of the trades after release.

In response to questions, Jen also spoke about other issues in progress: the housing project on Golden Hill; the return of some mental health beds to Health Alliance Hospital; the two open positions at the county's new Grants Office; and the overall number of county government positions open because of low salary levels.

Beyond Ulster County, Jen noted her collaboration with other county executives to advocate at state level, and her work as chair of the NY State Association of Counties Climate Task Force. In that capacity she sponsored a resolution in support of state Extended Producer Responsibility legislation on packaging. It passed unanimously (though red counties far outnumber blue counties in the state). Another of her resolutions, to push NYSERDA and the state to implement more rebate programs, also passed unanimously.

November Elections

Canvasses Oct. 28-29 will emphasize early voting. About 55% of our turfs have been completed so far. There will be GOTV canvassing using new turfs on the final weekend before the election (Nov. 4-5). Skip Arthur appealed for more letters to the editor in support of Aimee Richter and Keith Gurgui. 500 County postcards will go to infrequent voters and prime Dems for whom we don't have phones.

Mike Harkavy moved that the Committee support Ballot Proposition no. 5, switching the office of Saugerties Receiver of Taxes from an elected to an appointed position; the motion was seconded by Margo McGilvrey. The motion passed.

Committee Business

Nejla asked guest Ian Byrne to introduce himself. He explained that he came having received a welcome letter from Kathy Gordon.

Filling Vacancy in ED15: Andrew (Andy) Cowan is seeking to join the Committee, having met with the Search Committee and volunteered in various capacities over the past year. Kevin Freeman nominated Andy for membership in ED15, seconded by Skip Arthur. By secret ballot the Committee voted in favor of his joining.

Bench for Pam Ross: Skip reported that the vendor does not recommend brass for the plaque. The alternative material will be more expensive, for a total cost of c. \$180 for the plaque.

December Meeting: Kathy Gordon proposed holding a December meeting to discuss specific issues beyond the scope of November's scheduled meeting. She noted that all members wishing to remain on the Committee will need to run for election starting in February. The Search

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Committee, from which Mike Harkavy has resigned as chair, needs to organize to recruit new members. She also proposes a new Youth Voter Outreach Committee. Kathy moved for a shortened meeting on **Tuesday, December 12, at 7pm**. Rick Cousin offered a friendly amendment to set a limited agenda of specific issues, which was accepted, and seconded the motion as amended. The motion passed.

Community Updates

Town/Village: The dog park is open, located off Canoe Hill Rd. The pickle ball court is getting heavy use. The development now being built on North Street is not workforce housing.

County: Aaron Levine reported that the Legislature passed a resolution to form a RRA oversight committee. There is an interim executive director of the RRA who may be able to identify a permanent successor.

State: Bill Barr noted the importance of the Extended Producer Responsibility packaging legislation.

Federal: Rep. Molinaro's comments about his votes for Jim Jordan as House speaker have been used in an ad for Josh Riley.

There being no other business, Margo McGilvrey moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Andy Cowan, and the meeting adjourned at 8:59pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise Bloomfield, Secretary

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