



Saugerties Democratic Committee February 27, 2024 Monthly Meeting Minutes Senior Center, 7:00pm

Roll Call

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

Voting Members: Gilda Riccardi, Andrew Zink, Bill Barr, Deena Turner, Sakinah Irizarry, Skip Arthur, Christine Dinsmore, Nejla Lias, Kathy Gordon, Louise Bloomfield, Nancy Schaefer, Barbara Boyce, Bob Gelbach, Kevin Freeman, Andy Cowan, Lanny Walter

Guests: Oswaldo Arias, Ken Germano, Molly Mackaman, Aimee Richter, Joanne Pagano Weber

Chair Nejla Lias welcomed the guests and invited them to introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes

Kevin Freeman moved to approve the Minutes of the meeting held on January 24 and January 30, 2024, seconded by Gilda Riccardi. The motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

Louise Bloomfield moved to approve the Treasurer's Report, seconded by Christine Dinsmore. The motion passed.

SDC TREASURER REPORT FEBRUARY 2024

	Actual	
Beginning Balance		
23-Jan-24		\$3,198.28
Income		
ActBlue Donations SDC	129.62	
Total Income		\$129.62
Expenses		
Check 447 K. Gordon (Ltrhd)	(313.20)	
Stamps (New Dems Ltrs)	(40.80)	
Zoom CC Payment	(15.99)	
Total Expenses		(\$369.99)
New Balance		
27-Feb-24		\$2,957.91

Petition Update

Bill Barr reported that the state Legislature will vote on its revision of the Independent Redistricting Commission's maps on February 29. That will make those versions legal, whether or not any lawsuit against the Congressional map is mounted. Petitions (including for the appropriate Congressional candidate) will be available for collection by Committee members starting Friday, March 1. Any non-Committee members who wish to collect petition signatures on behalf candidates approved or endorsed by the Ulster County Democratic Committee (UCDC) should coordinate with the SDC candidates in their election district. Petitioners should assume that the signature quotas will not change; the delay to the start of the petitioning period is minimal. The deadline to deliver all SDC-approved petitions to Bill Barr is Friday, March 22. It was noted that SDC members carrying petitions for opponents to the UCDC's endorsed candidates must also offer petitions for the endorsed candidate, and cannot themselves sign a petition for either candidate in that contest.

Saugerties Democratic Committee Business

Ulster County Democratic Committee [UCDC] Bylaws and SDC Bylaws Review: Nejla recapped the County Committee's recently completed bylaws review process, noting changes to the municipal committee members' responsibilities and clarified regulations about town committee members running for office. She pointed out that some of the SDC's bylaws will need corresponding changes, and that other updates may also be necessary.

Nejla called for an ad hoc committee of the SDC to review the current bylaws against the new UCDC bylaws and recommend changes for adoption by the full SDC. One area to be clarified is the policy on endorsing candidates for office at local (town) level. Nejla proposed Lanny Walter, who just led the UCDC bylaws review, to chair the ad hoc committee. Lanny explained that the UCDC bylaws designate certain "default rules" that allow municipal committees to change just those rules in their own bylaws. Aside from default rules, any issue not addressed in the municipal committee bylaws automatically falls under the County Committee bylaws.

Nejla then moved from the chair to establish an ad hoc committee to review the Bylaws of the Saugerties Democratic Committee for (i) alignment with the County Committee's updated bylaws; (ii) update the SDC's endorsement policy and process for candidates for local office; (iii) revise the listed standing committees of the SDC. Andrew Zink seconded the motion. The motion passed. Lanny will chair the committee, whose members are Ken Germano, Gilda Riccardi, Aimee Richter and Deena Rae Turner. It was noted that all members of the ad hoc committee are either current SDC members or running for election to SDC seats for the 2024-2026 term. The outcome of the bylaws committee's work will be voted on by the voting members of the SDC. Andrew Zink proposed a friendly amendment to the motion to allow nonmembers running for seats to take part on the ad hoc committee. Nejla accepted the

amendment and moved to vote on the amended motion, seconded by Christine Dinsmore. The motion passed as amended.

Mailings Group: Kathy Gordon proposed a mailings group that would reach out to Saugerties pre-registered youth turning 18, newly registered Democrats, and others. The group would be open to non-SDC members and would meet monthly at a regular time. It would write letters to the editor, postcards to voters in other states, etc. (Some evidence shows that handwritten turnout messages are more effective than other types of mailing for this purpose.) Ideally the group could meet in a public place such as Inquiring Minds. Nejla moved to create an ad hoc committee of members and nonmembers for the purpose that could then become a standing committee under the next set of bylaws. Bill Barr seconded the motion, which passed. Kathy, Molly Mackaman and Joanne Weber will meet to plan the next steps.

City of Kingston Democratic Committee letter on Israel/Gaza: This letter [appended at the end of these Minutes] had been circulated and discussed at the February 21 UCDC Convention. The matter was referred to the UCDC Executive Committee, to decide whether to send it out to all the members on behalf of the UCDC. At that meeting, Chair Kelleigh McKenzie suggested it could instead be circulated and discussed peer to peer among UCDC members by reviving the Google group that had existed to facilitate discussion of issues, but was shut down after discussions grew ugly. Meanwhile, following from its coverage of the Convention, *Hudson Valley One* published the letter, mistakenly identifying it as a statement by the UCDC.

Bob Gelbach suggested that, rather than the SDC taking a position on such a letter, we could add a standing Agenda item for our meetings to update on and discuss current issues. Kathy proposed drafting a resolution that the SDC could vote on and that, if passed, could be sent to government representatives at all levels. Christine had met with Rep. Pat Ryan and others on this issue, and outlined his stated positions on this issue. A discussion followed.

“Getting to Know You”: As the SDC reorganizes for the new term, Kevin Freeman will develop a meeting slot and format for individual members to tell fellow members about themselves, as had been doing earlier this term.

Reschedule of Meetings: The Senior Center is unavailable for several scheduled SDC meeting dates, including the next meeting’s (March 26), because it’s an election/early voting poll site. The members agreed to hold the next meeting March 25, in-person location or Zoom-only TBD. [This was later rescheduled for March 19, 7:00pm at the Community Room of the Saugerties Public Library.] The May 28 meeting scheduled will be at a different location, and the meeting scheduled for June 25—Primary Election Day—could be held on June 18 at a different location.

Community Updates

Village: Bill reported that the Village Planning Board is considering a request to establish a cannabis dispensary, set back off Rte. 212 near the SPAF facility.

Town: Lanny reported some signs of progress on developing Bristol Beach, including a willingness to focus on trails. Andy Cowan reported that the *Chronogram* article on efforts to preserve Winston Farm--for which several SDC members are featured in an accompanying photograph amid an excellent turnout—will appear in the next issue. The environmental impact study is expected within the next month or two.

School District: Sakinah Irizarry reported that the district has added a top-level administrator position, without the federal funding that it had for the past three years but that has now stopped. Security is only available during the school day, despite a busy schedule after school hours.

Other Items: Christine Dinsmore announced a March 2 Ulster NAACP Lunch celebrating International Women’s Day, in Ellenville.

Andrew Zink announced a remembrance gathering for Starllie Swonyoung, scheduled for March 24. A focus will be a call for road safety. A discussion of this issue followed.

Nejla reminded everyone that petitioning is the immediate priority.

There being no other business, Lanny Walter moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Bill Barr. The meeting adjourned at 9:02pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise Bloomfield, Secretary

[The referenced *City of Kingston Democratic Committee letter on Israel/Gaza* is reproduced on the following pages.]

February 16, 2024

Honorable Federal Representative,

We write as concerned members of the Ulster County Democratic Committee to urge you to call for an immediate end to the ongoing violence between the Netanyahu government and Hamas. We call on you to substantially reduce our federal government's unconditional military aid in this war. The brutal events that have transpired both before and after the attack on innocent civilians on October 7, 2023 are outside the bounds of any justified practices of warfare. Today, the United States stands alone on the global stage in its support for the Netanyahu government's collective punishment of Gaza and the West Bank.

This violence has exposed fractures within our community as neighbors have lost loved ones in the violence and many others experience continued health problems bearing witness to the scale and atrocities of war. Peace and reconciliation are needed both in the conflict region and here in Ulster County to ensure that our global and local communities heal and grow together. In the last few months, we have listened to hundreds of neighbors, families, and community members across political and religious backgrounds speak to each other and to their elected representatives in favor of peace and an end to unfettered and deadly military aid.

The Netanyahu government can only engage in the collective punishment of Gaza with the direct military, financial and intelligence assistance of the United States federal government. This support through tax dollars directly connects all Americans to the indiscriminate behavior of the Israeli military and any crimes committed during this military conflict. We urge the federal government to turn away from its commitment to war and military aid. As local officials and Democratic Committee members, we prefer that federal dollars be invested in environmentally-just housing, public transportation, free school lunches, healthcare and other vital programs critically needed in Ulster County and across the United States, as well as providing humanitarian aid to Palestinian refugees to rebuild their homes, institutions and health infrastructure. We envision a country and world beyond brutality that makes use of our immense technological achievements for sustainable public care infrastructure.

The Democratic Party stands for justice, peace, education and the wellbeing of all people across the globe, regardless of borders. As Democrats, we urge you to work toward an immediate end to hostilities between the Netanyahu government and Hamas, halt unregulated military aid and restrict future military aid to Israel to prevent further collective punishment, and reinvest federal dollars from war to address pressing issues in Ulster County such as the current housing crisis and other deeply-needed social and health programs. It is clear we must take active steps toward healing together now before we are further divided.

Sincerely,

Michele Hirsch, Kingston Democratic Committee, ED 2
Laura Nordstrom, Kingston Democratic Committee, ED 3
Reynolds Scott-Childress, Kingston Democratic Committee, ED 3
Michael Tierney, Kingston Democratic Committee, ED 2
Chelsea Villalba, Kingston Democratic Committee, ED 4
Name, Committee, Election
District Name, Committee,
Election District Name,

Committee, Election District
Name, Committee, Election
District Name, Committee,
Election District

CC: U.S. Representative Patrick Ryan
U.S. Senator Charles Schumer
U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
