

Democratic Rural Conference

Minutes from a Meeting of the DRC Board of Directors

Sunday February 26, 2023 at 1:30 PM

Via Zoom

The meeting of the DRC Board of Directors was called to order by Ms. Hunter at 1:35 PM

Board members in attendance

Judith Hunter	Bill Thickstun	Michael Plitt
Jeanne Crane	Liz Moran	John Hurley
Keith Batman	Ted Young	Kimberly Davis
Margaret Bartley	Michael Monescalchi	Tom Schimmerling
Frank Puglisi	Tim Perfetti	Dan Farfaglia
Cindy Appleton	Ron McDougall	

Board member not in attendance

Bill Hughes Darlene Baker

Guests

There were approximately 35 guests in attendance. As has been the practice for meetings held via Zoom, the names are not listed.

Approval of Minutes: John Hurley

Mr. Hurley presented the minutes from the July 23, 2022 Board of Directors meeting. No edits or changes were offered.

Mr. McDougall moved approval of the minutes. Mr. Puglisi seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hurley then presented the minutes from the January 21, 2023 Board of Directors meeting. No edits or changes were offered.

Mr. Batman moved approval of the minutes. Mr. Young seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer Report : Frank Puglisi

Mr. Puglisi presented the Treasurer's report:

REPORT IS AS OF 2/25/2023.

STATE ACCOUNT-

BALANCE AS OF JANUARY 21, 2023, \$16,699.10

16,699.10

- 150.11 – NEON MONTHLY CHARGE (FEBRUARY)

16,548.99

+ 3,341.27 – DEPOSITS (SEE BREAKDOWN BELOW)

19,890.26 (BANK BALANCE AS OF FEBRUARY 25, 2023)

DEPOSIT BREAKDOWN

COUNTY DUES – ACTBLUE - \$810 – 32.04 (ActBlue fee) = \$777.96

CHECK – \$2,160.00

TOTAL OF COUNTY DUES = \$2,937.96

ASSOCIATE DUES – ACTBLUE - \$170 – 6.75(ActBlue fee) = \$163.25

CHECK - \$20

TOTAL OF ASSOCIATE DUES = \$183.25

PROGRAM BOOK – ACTBLUE - \$125 – 4.94 (ActBlue fee) = \$120.06

CHECK - \$100

TOTAL PROGRAM BOOK \$220.06

FEDERAL PAC –

BANK BALANCE AS OF JANUARY 21, 2023, \$56.00

NO TRANSACTIONS

\$56.00 (BANK BALANCE AS OF FEBRUARY 25, 2023)

Mr. Puglisi said there is a process notifying folks who register for the conference even though their county has not paid the dues. They are notified that they will not be able to vote until the dues are paid.

2023 Conference Report: Jane Dodds

Because of the Secretary's connectivity issues this section of the minutes is a merged reporting of information shared by Ms. Dodds and Ms. Hunter.

The theme for the 2023 DRC Conference is "Building the Bench".

The conference will be held on Friday and Saturday, April 14 and 15, in Saratoga. We are very pleased to be back at the Saratoga Hilton after many years away; it has always been a great venue for us. They are holding open a block of rooms at a special rate for the DRC of \$139; that price is good if you register before April 1.

Registration is open for the conference as well as the link for room reservations.

The link: <https://drcny.app.neoncrm.com/eventReg.jsp?event=31&>

The credentials table will open at 1:00 pm and programming will begin at 2 pm on Friday.

Ms. Hunter noted that the conference is not just for county chairs and state committee people. County committee members, candidates or potential candidates, local elected officials and campaign operatives will find value in attending.

In addition to the traditional Friday night dinner and speeches, the conference committee is planning to have programs covering deep canvassing, the field side of campaigns, the new public campaign financing program for state races, and a presentation by ActBlue on how their services can be used for down-ballot races. There will also be an extra session geared especially for treasurers of committees and campaigns.

They indicated that there is a need for volunteers to assist with set up and pre-conference activities. Board members should plan to arrive at 9:00 am Friday but all are welcome to help.

Ms. Hunter reminded everyone that proceeds from conference are distributed to counties. In 2022 were able to distribute larger than usual

amounts because of the success of the conference and as importantly, sales of ads for the program book.

Ms. Hunter encouraged all the counties to take advantage of the heavily discounted ad rate. She stressed the need to sell ads to local businesses, candidates, unions, and elected officials in their communities.

Nominating Committee: Phil Jones

Mr. Jones reported that he sent an email to the full membership reporting on the status of the elections to be held at the conference.

He noted that elections would be held for 6 at-large director positions as well as the Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and Parliamentarian.

Mr. Jones requested assistance conducting the election. Please contact Ms. Hunter if you want to assist.

At this point the Secretary lost connectivity and had to temporarily leave the meeting.

Report from the Chair: Judith Hunter

Ms. Hunter said that she would defer most of her time until discussion about State Chair Jay Jacobs NYSDems reform proposal.

She said that she has noticed some improvement in the way the Governor's office is responding to requests. They are beginning to reach out to rural counties.

Ms. Hunter stated that chairs should still follow the standard appointment process for Council and Board positions, but they should also send the information to her to forward to the Governor's staff. This will mean potential appointments for Boards and Councils will get reviewed by the Governor's staff, in addition to the Appointments Office.

Committee Reports

By-Laws Committee: Darlene Baker

No Report. At present the by-laws are in good shape after a few years of much activity.

Issues Committee: Keith Batman

No Report

Communication and Outreach Committee: Bill Thickstun

Mr. Thickstun reported that there are only 5 voting members with missing emails. This means that they can't vote or receive communications. He is working with the county chairs to get the information in Neon.

Political Committee: Tim Perfetti

Mr. Perfetti reported that the DRC advocacy days were very productive. The DRC members met with 21 different elected officials.

He offered a recap of the discussions:

Election Reform – the DRC favors about 95% of what is being proposed by legislators. He did express concern about Senate bill 645 – related to pre-qualifications for becoming an election commissioner.

Rural Broadband Access: the elected official expressed “annoyance” at the issue being raised again. Mr. Perfetti recommended that they fix the problem and we will stop talking about it.

Adult Use Cannabis: the DRC wants to insure that the social justice portions of the legislation are implemented. He also discussed the requirement for MBE and WOBE have 2 years of tax returns...law has not been in effect for 2 years.

Infrastructure: all legislators are in favor of solar farms but unfamiliar with resistance in local rural counties. Ms. Hunter recommended that the elected officials improve messaging about the benefits of solar farms for rural communities.

Mr. Perfetti said that he is working on bringing more structure to the political committee so that we can provide more regular information to legislators.

Ms. Hunter said that she was still trying to get more legislators to the conference so that they can provide updates.

Old Business

None

New Business

Ms. Hunter initiated a discussion of the Reform Proposal distributed by Jay Jacobs. She noted that the proposal was sent only to county chairs.

She said that Jacobs planned to call an in-person meeting of County Chairs and Executive Committee next month.

Ms. Hunter said that generally the proposal included lots of good stuff for rural counties but that some aspects that are problematic. Ms. Hunter said that she was speaking about the proposal with Jay on Tuesday 02/28/2023. She asked for comment and reaction to the proposal from the chairs present.

Comments

- Frustrated with Judicial Convention process. Ask Jay to host a tutorial about the Judicial Convention process.
- Little likelihood that “lead agencies” will support many rural counties – little chance of winning campaigns so they won’t bother.
- The State Committee has traditionally focused to a great extent on the political needs of the Governor. The rural counties need the NYSDC to be about Row A in general.
- Proposal does address adding additional staff...but not enough.
- The language was very tentative – a convenient excuse for not taking action. “Whenever possible”, “when funding allows”, “will happen unless”...this sets up reasons for not doing anything.
- Lots of DRC recommendations were included but if resources are allocated by weighted vote rural counties will still lose.
- Concerned that smaller counties will not be allocated funds if combined with larger counties.
- Ms. Hunter said that she is committed to making sure that rural county chairs are treated fairly if/when resources are available.
- Concerned about the focus on "lead agencies," as they often employ staff that are unfamiliar with rural counties and ignore our advice. That's when they do get involved in our races, but all too often "lead agencies" ignore our races altogether because of the lopsided registration numbers in some of the small counties. That makes it hard

for us to create the conditions that could make such races more competitive in the future, which we could if we had more support in building our bench through down-ballot races.

- Who will be responsible for hiring the regional people mentioned in the proposal?
- There needs to be an outreach director(s) for rural counties – based in rural counties.
- Mr. Puglisi analyzed results of the 2022 Congressional result for rural counties where the entire county was in a congressional district. He found that if the Democratic vote in those counties had increased by 5% the results in 1 seat would have flipped and two others would have been closer.
- Ms. Hunter noted that all DRC counties had better 2022 turnout than NYC.
- She encouraged Chairs to follow-up directly with Jay in addition to sharing any additional comments with her before the end of day Monday.
- How do we get contact information for state committee staff.
- Mr. Puglisi said that if there was a need to urgently reach state party staff, we should get in touch contact with Judith or him.
- A concern about difficulty communicating among DRC members was expressed.
- Ms. Hunter shared that perhaps we should reconsider using Slack.

Announcements

No Announcements

Next Meeting

Date of the next DRC Board meeting to be determined much closer to the Conference

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Young and seconded by Mr. Batman. The motion passed unanimously at 3:20 PM

Respectfully submitted,

John F. Hurley

Secretary, Democratic Rural Conference