

Democratic Rural Conference

Minutes from a Meeting of the DRC Board of Directors

Sunday September 24, 2023 at 7:00 PM

Via Zoom

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Hunter at 7:03 PM

Board members in attendance

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

Board member not in attendance

Jim Mills

Approval of Minutes: John Hurley

Ms. Hunter asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the July 29, 2023, Board meeting. Motion to approve by Mr. Batman and seconded by Mr. Young. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer Report : Frank Puglisi

REPORT IS AS OF 9/23/2023

STATE ACCOUNT-

BALANCE AS OF JULY 29, 2023, \$29,526.77

29,526.77

- 150.11 – NEON August

29,376.66

- 150.11 – NEON September

29,226.55

-21,150.00 – Allocation Checks to Counties

8,076.55

+ 250.00 – Donation (Refunded Below)

8,326.55

- 250.00 – Donation Refunded

8,076.55

+ 250.00 – Donation

8,326.55

+ 1.92 – Donation (reoccurring)

8,326.55

+ 19.20 – Donation (reoccurring)

8,345.75

Bank Balance as of September 23, 2023 - \$8,345.75

FEDERAL PAC –

BANK BALANCE AS OF July 29, 2023, \$10,056.00

NO ACTIVITY

\$10,056.00 (BANK BALANCE AS OF September 23, 2023)

Mr. Puglisi announced that the county allocation checks in the amount of \$450.00 for each county were sent out on 9/21/2023. Please notify him if checks are not received by Wednesday 09/27/2023.

He reminded the board that this is not housekeeping money so can be used for candidates and campaigns.

Ms. Hunter noted that the board held \$8,000 in our account to provide funds for DRC operations and early expenses related to 2024 conference.

Motion to approve the Treasurer report made by Ms. Baker seconded by Mr. Hughes. The vote to approve was unanimous.

Report from the Chair: Judith Hunter

Ms. Hunter reminded all county chairs to be aware of the paperwork and details if this is a year that their county reorganizes. Don't give the GOP an opportunity challenge the process.

The Reorganization meeting must be held between September 17, 2023 and October 6, 2023.

Please note that once the meeting is held the results of the meeting must be sent to the NY State Board of Elections and the County Board of Elections within 3 days of the meeting along with a copy of the county bylaws (regardless of whether they have changed). The form can be emailed.

Ms. Hunter said that the DRC needs to find ways to help committees that are challenged by the GOP.

She also stressed that we need to be proactive about educating downstate Democrats as to what life in upstate red counties is like.

Ms. Hunter noted that the DRC members need to reach out to downstate Democrats to build support for our proposals at the state committee.

Committee Reports

By-Laws Committee

No changes proposed.

Ms. Baker said that the By-Laws committee would look into language to allow us to attend meetings via Zoom.

Communications

No report at this time.

Political Committee: Tim Perfetti

Mr. Perfetti said that we need to start preparing for 2024 Advocacy Days.

He asked for ideas for issues to present during Advocacy Days

He noted that we need to get there early as the Senate takes up election reform early in January.

Several ideas were offered by members of the board.

Mr. Batman said all were good suggestions but that we need more time to develop and discuss what our priorities should be.

Mr. Thickstun – presented his proposal for reforms to judicial conventions.

He stated that it is difficult for State Supreme Court candidates to get elected just on the Democratic line. In most districts the Conservative Party won't offer the line. He said that candidates need to be limited to only one line.

His Proposal included the following:

1) Eliminate party fusion voting. It would be important to keep the ability for candidates to run on non-partisan independent lines. That way every candidate would have access to two ballot lines, depending only on their own effort and not on the whims of minor party leaders.

2) Eliminate judicial conventions. We carry petitions for judges directly at the city and county level. Why does the Supreme Court need to be handled differently?

3) In the absence of these major changes, election law should at least provide a cap of 1,000 on required judicial signatures per county--the same as for a countywide petition--or 5% of party voters for counties where that would result in a smaller number.

4) When the number of party candidates for judicial seats is equal to or fewer than the number of vacancies (almost always the case), names of the candidates should appear on the petition above the delegates and alternates, just as Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates appear above their slate of electors.

5) In the party call, delegate and alternate numbers should be apportioned by County and Assembly district, not just by AD, in the same way that State Committee members are currently. Judicial petitions should be prepared, circulated, and filed by county, with each county responsible for its own.

Discussion followed. Comments included:

It makes sense to organize Supreme Courts nominations by county.

This has been a problem for a long time.

The proposal is so large that it is unlikely to anyplace at the state committee.

We should focus on proposal #5 and some aspects of #3

Must resolve the inconsistency between eliminating petitioning on one hand and limiting signatures for judicial races.

Mr. Thickstun explained that he separated each of the proposals so that they could be taken individually.

Mr. Thickstun moved to rework the proposal to include sections so that it can be presented to the full state committee. Mr. Schimmerling seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

2024 Conference

Ms. Hunter announced that the 2024 DRC conference would be held at the Desmond in Albany April 26/27, 2024.

Since 2024 is a Congressional year we will need rooms for breakouts.

Since NY is ground zero for taking back the House we need to work hard to get on all candidate calendars.

Mr. Puglisi moved that the DRC purchase a used laptop for use at registration. Mr. Batman second. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

New Business

Ms. Hunter introduced Rick Gell and thanked him for time spent demonstrating Civic Network and discussing resolutions prior to the state committee meeting.

2 decisions are required:

Do we speak with one voice – make a DRC recommendation?

Which resolutions will be supported?

Rick Gell restates the 5 resolutions:

1. Need more robust state committee meetings.
2. Committees need to offer more detailed reports.
3. Minimum amount of funding to each county - \$5,000 per county for operations not for campaigns
4. Allow county chairs to vote at state committee meeting.
5. Civic Network proposal
Civic network explained in more detail.
Protocols for privacy protection

Concern was raised about the need for orientation for new county chairs.

Ms. Hunter acknowledged the need for new chair orientation but at this time we need to focus on these 5 proposals.

Ms. Appleton moved that the DRC should take a position to speak with one voice. The motion was seconded by Mr. Thickstun. The motion passed with 14 in favor and 1 abstention.

Announcements

Next meeting: Saturday 11/19/2023 7:00 pm

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Young and seconded by Ms. Appleton

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 PM

Respectfully submitted,

John F. Hurley

Secretary, Democratic Rural Conference