

Democratic Rural Conference  
DRC General Membership Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday November 14, 2023 at 7:15 PM  
Long Island Marriott

The meeting was called to order by Chair Judith Hunter at 7:15 PM.

**Board members in attendance**

|               |                     |                |
|---------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Judith Hunter | Tim Perfetti        | Bill Thickstun |
| Michael Plitt | Michael Monescalchi | James Mills    |

**Board member not in attendance**

|                |               |                  |              |
|----------------|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| Cindy Appleton | Darlene Baker | Frank Puglisi    | Jeanne Crane |
| John Hurley    | Keith Batman  | Kimberly Davis   | Liz Moran    |
| Maggie Bartley | Ron McDougall | Tom Schimmerling | Ted Young    |

Bill Hughes

There were about 50 people in the room, including several State Committee members from non-DRC counties.

Judith Hunter welcomed everyone. As minutes of the last general membership meeting on May 10 had not been distributed, she deferred their approval to the next opportunity.

In the absence of Treasurer Frank Puglisi, she reported that we have \$8,345.75 on hand, \$450 having been distributed to each of the 47 DRC counties. Tim Perfetti moved and Michael Plitt seconded approval of the treasurer's report, which passed unanimously.

Chair Hunter introduced Alejandra Pollak ([alejandra@nydlc.org](mailto:alejandra@nydlc.org)), Executive Director of the NY Democratic Lawyers Council, the voter protection arm of the state committee. They can help us at the county level with legal support.

Judith Hunter called on us to collect verifiable instances of upstate outrages against the Democratic party, its candidates, and its voters. If we can document—but only if we can document—unethical or illegal behavior by the other side, Judith wants to hear about it.

She next introduced Rob Silverstein ([rob@kathyhochul.com](mailto:rob@kathyhochul.com)) from the Governor's political team. He fielded various questions about support for the party in rural counties.

State Committee Chair Jay Jacobs addressed the room. He spoke against Resolution 3 on the state committee agenda, which would mandate \$5,000 grants to the rural counties and \$10,000 to the others, to be distributed early each year. Housekeeping money, as opposed to campaign money, is the hardest to raise. The Governor herself has been doing call time to help with this work. Jay noted that he is the first state committee chair to make routine annual grants to counties. He wants to retain discretion in awarding these grants in response to county requests.

Chair Hunter responded by citing the need for early, consistent, and predictable funding. A reliable funding stream is necessary for a county to rent office space, which can create a Democratic presence in rural areas. Without predictable support, it's difficult to budget for fundraising venues, mailings, and other administrative expenses. Concerns about accountability will be met under the proposal by required annual reports from the counties. Arguably, the weakest counties have the greatest need. She believes we need a 62-county strategy to strengthen the party across the state.

Her remarks were followed by extended applause and statements of support from several non-DRC county attendees.

There were no committee reports. The meeting was adjourned shortly after 8pm.

Respectfully submitted,

William R. Thickstun

Acting Secretary, Democratic Rural Conference