

Democratic Rural Conference

Minutes from a Meeting of the DRC Board of Directors

Sunday January 28, 2024 at 7:00 PM

Via Zoom

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Hunter at 7:00 PM

Board members in attendance

Cindy Appleton	Bill Hughes	Liz Moran
Darlene Baker	Judith Hunter	Tim Perfetti
Maggie Bartley	John Hurley	Michael Plitt
Jeanne Crane	Ron McDougall	Jim Mills
Kimberly Davis	Michael Monescalchi	Bill Thickstun
Ted Young		

Board member not in attendance

Keith Batman	Frank Puglisi	Tom Schimmerling
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Approval of Minutes: John Hurley

Ms. Hunter asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the November 19, 2023 Board meeting. Motion to approve by Ms. Baker and seconded by Mr. McDougall. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer Report :

Ms. Hunter announced that Mr. Puglisi had resigned as Treasurer due to serious health issues. She noted that he had recently received positive news but needed to focus on returning to good health and therefore was stepping down as Treasurer.

Because a formal Treasurer report was not presented a vote to approve was not moved.

Ms. Hunter noted that this was a critical period for the DRC with the conference only 3 months away. She emphasized that the Treasurer plays a critical role overseeing the many financial aspects of the conference.

Ms. Hunter explained to the board that because of their knowledge of NEON and many aspects of conference preparation she had asked Mr. Hurley to take on responsibilities of acting Treasurer and asked Mr. Thickstun to become acting Secretary.

Ms. Davis moved to approve Mr. Hurley as the Treasurer until the elections at the DRC Conference in April 2024. Mr. Plitt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hurley moved to designate Mr. Thickstun as the Secretary until the elections at the DRC Conference in April 2024. Ms. Baker seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Hunter raised the issue of setting dues for 2024. She noted that dues had been \$90.00 for the last 2 years. She also shared that when she spoke with Mr. Puglisi recently, he recommended that the dues remain at \$90.00 per county. Mr. Hurley moved setting the dues for 2024 at \$90.00 per county. Mr. Perfetti seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Report from the Chair: Judith Hunter

Ms. Hunter reminded board members that at some point soon the State Committee must meet to designate Senator Gillibrand as candidate for reelection. Petitioning begins at the end of February and State Committee rules state that there must be a 25-day notice so there is not much time.

Committee Reports

Nominating Committee

Mr. Jones explained that it was the intention of the Nominating Committee to conduct the elections at the April conference as was done last year.

Voting will be done virtually using Election Buddy. Mr. Jones asked if the board wanted to extend the ability to vote to eligible members who are not physically attending the conference. There was not a formal vote but no one objected. It was also noted that because every member is able to vote it will not be necessary to deal with proxies.

Mr. Jones listed the offices that will be contested in April:

- 4 Regional Vice-Chairs

- 5 At-Large Directors
- Treasurer (fill the 1 year remaining)
- Secretary (fill the 1 year remaining)

By-Laws Committee

No Report

Communications

No report - Mr. Thickstun noted that Bulletin 41 was released recently and asked that anyone who did not receive it contact him.

Political Committee: Tim Perfetti

Mr. Perfetti was delighted to share that the DRC had 3 great days in Albany during the DRC Advocacy Days the previous week. The DRC team met with 21 elected officials in addition to Leader Cousins and staff from the Speakers office.

He reiterated the issues they discussed:

Election Reform

- The need for full time election commissioners in every county
- Hiring appropriate levels of staff to support full time commissioners.
- Met with Latrice Walker – Chair of the Assembly Elections Committee.
- Met with Assembly Member Bill Magnarelli on his bill A-253, which would allow for county committees to designate candidates at a county convention rather than petitioning.
- A candidate would need 25% of the vote to secure a place on the ballot.
- The petition process would still be available to any candidate who did not secure 25% of the vote.
- The process would apply to counties with less than 1 million voters.

Wine sales in grocery stores

- In general, very little resistance to opposing the proposal.

Universal Broadband

- Continued to press the case that there is no equity without universal access.

CHIPS Funding

- Continued to advocate the important funding for local governments.

Foundation Aid

- Removing the Hold Harmless provision would devastate local school districts.

Ms. Hunter noted that each year the DRC Advocacy Days are better organized, better received and more effective.

The most important part is the need to follow up with each of the legislators.

Ms. Hunter emphasized that legislators really don't understand the challenges of petitioning in rural counties.

Mr. Perfetti said that it would be effective if DRC members wrote letters / emails to legislators.

He could provide the names of legislators to be contacted and the appropriate talking points.

Ms. Bartley suggested that we prepare one letter for multiple people to sign.

Ms. Hunter recommended that we present this as an Upstate issue and not just a rural issue.

2024 Conference

Ms. Dodds reported that the DRC has received the contract / proposal from the Crowne Desmond in Albany.

The room rate is \$150.00/night

There are several items on the Master Bill that the DRC covers but elected officials will cover the opening reception, dessert reception, Saturday breakfast and lunch.

For dinner there are several options....all more expensive than last year.

Ms. Dodds said that given the increased costs and the potential for unexpected costs, she recommended that the conference registration fee be increased from \$135 to \$150.

Ms. Hunter moved that Ms. Dodds sign the contract offered by the Crowne Desmond. Mr. Perfetti seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Hunter reviewed the conference program as it stands on January 28.

Friday Morning

- Board members assemble in the work room at 10:00

- Board meeting during lunch at noon

Friday Afternoon

- Registration opens at 1:00
- 2:00 PM - Corey Mosher presentation about the New York State Legislative Commission on Rural Resources.
- 3:00 PM - Nia Alvarez-Mapp making a presentation on the New York Equality Amendment.
- 4:00 - Legislative update
 - Ms. Hunter noted that inviting legislators to the conference generates a lot of goodwill, creates awareness for them and their staff and has been an important reason for success during the annual Advocacy Days.

Friday Evening

- Opening Reception
 - Hosted by Governor Hochul or Senator Gillibrand
- Dinner with Democratic Elected Officials
- Dessert Reception
 - Hosted by Attorney General James

Saturday Morning

- Breakfast hosted by Comptroller DiNapoli
- Business Meeting
- Elections – virtual
- Congressional Breakout sessions

Saturday Afternoon

- Lunch hosted by Jeffries for Congress
- Board meeting after the conference wraps.

Remembering that we had not voted to establish the conference registration fee, Ms. Bartley moved that the registration fee for the 2024 DRC Conference be set at \$150.00. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mills.

The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

None

New Business

Mr. Thickstun presented his revised resolutions related to petitioning and the State Supreme Court designation process.

The board agreed that resolutions 2, 3 and 4 are substantially the same as those we approved in September and that Mr. Thickstun can use the signatures already received for those. He will also solicit signatures from any state committee members who are willing to join him in sponsoring resolution 1 (elimination of fusion voting) and 5 (allowing county chairs to carry proxies from Executive Committee members).

Next meeting:

Sunday March 3, 2024 at 7:00 PM via Zoom

Adjourn

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM

Respectfully submitted,

John F. Hurley

Secretary, Democratic Rural Conference