

Democratic Rural Conference

Minutes from a Meeting of the DRC Board of Directors

Sunday March 24, 2024 at 7:00 PM

Via Zoom

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

Board members in attendance

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

Board members not in attendance

Kimberly Davis	Jim Mills
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Other attendees

Lena Bishop	Jane Dodds	Caitlin Ogden
Lynne Boecher	Kathleen Hayek	Morris Owens
James Carr	Michael Lausell	Paul Phister
Joan Davis	Jamal Malik	Bob Reynolds
Max Della Pia	A J Magnan	Barb Turpin

Approval of Minutes: Bill Thickstun

Mr. McDougal moved to approve the minutes of the January 28, 2024 DRC Board meeting. Ms. Moran seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: John Hurley

Mr. Hurley reported that he has established a new DRC account at Key Bank with himself and Ms. Hunter as signatories. They will travel to close the existing account at Franklinville Community Bank and transfer the funds from both the state and federal accounts. It took some research to track down our Employer Identification Number (EIN) at the IRS and make these changes possible. Our Act Blue and Neon payment links are now attached to the new Key Bank account and Mr. Hurley will sign up for automatic deposits. The state BOE has been extremely helpful in our efforts to update the missing DRC financial filings to which Kimberly Davis alerted us last summer. Mr. Hurley anticipates that he should be able to provide a standard Treasurer's financial statement in 7 -10 days.

For the future, Mr. Hurley recommends that we create a secure online location for key items: bylaws, 1998 DRC founding resolutions, EIN records and related documents. As Key Bank has branches throughout the state, that change should make future transitions in the Treasurer position easier.

We have received dues checks from 19-20 of the 47 DRC counties and ad checks from 10. The ad deadline for the DRC booklet is April 1, which is only a week away. County dues of \$90 must also be paid before the conference for voting members to be eligible to vote. We are running behind the usual timeframe for bringing in these conference revenues. Dues can be paid via Act Blue (preferably) at <https://nysdrc.org/drc-membership/> or by check to the Democratic Rural Conference, C/O John Hurley, Treasurer, 1039 Oak Ridge Drive, Victor, NY 14564.

Ms. Appleton moved to accept Mr. Hurley's report. Mr. Perfetti seconded. It passed unanimously.

Report from the Chair: Judith Hunter

Ms. Hunter thanked John Hurley for all the work he has done to get our finances in order. She announced the resignation of Jeanne Crane from the board and thanked her for her hard work over many years, especially on the DRC program book.

In the absence of nominating committee chair Phil Jones, she urged everyone to pay attention to his emails about the board elections coming up

at the conference. Candidates for board positions will be invited to provide email statements of interest and, in the event of a contested election, given 2-3 minutes to address the general membership meeting.

Ms. Hunter reminded everybody that early voting started today in the presidential primary and will end on Saturday, March 30 (with no voting on Easter Sunday). She urged everybody to vote and show support for the Biden/Harris ticket even though the race is already decided. Ms. Appleton reminded people of the need to vote for our DNC delegates who are also on the ballot.

Eleanor's Legacy, which supports women running for office in New York state, held a Zoom fundraiser recently at which Ms. Hunter was invited to moderate a conversation with historian and political commentator Heather Cox Richardson. Ms. Hunter's role and the accessible Zoom venue helped raise the profile of rural counties in the organization. She felt that the event was energizing for people on the call, which led her to propose a series of Zoom book discussions. Possible titles include *Hit Them Where It Hurts* (Rachel Bitecofer), *White Rural Rage* (Tom Schaller and Paul Waldman), and *Democracy Awakening* (Heather Cox Richardson). If people are interested they should let her know.

Conference Report: Judith Hunter / Jane Dodds

Ms. Hunter asked for volunteers to help Jane Dodds in the work of organizing the conference. Ms. Dodds has done an outstanding job for us for many years, but as we've recently seen, it's important to foster multiple people who can perform key roles in the organization. There has been one change to the agenda: the legislative Commission on Rural Resources session has been deferred to next year, and a session has been added on effective use of social media with Ny Whitaker, who is heading up NY for Biden/Harris. The entire NYS Congressional delegation has been invited and Dan Goldman has already accepted. The DCCC is sponsoring Saturday lunch, at which members of Congress and Lieutenant Governor Antonio Delgado will speak.

We will have breakout rooms by congressional district (8). A board volunteer will be needed to moderate in districts with multiple candidates. More generally, we need a board member as point person for every session, to introduce the speaker and deal with any issues that come up. Please let Ms. Hunter know what session you would be interested in hosting. We will also need people at doorways to check nametags. Michael Plitt volunteered in the chat to assist.

Board members should encourage their candidates to attend and to advertise in the program book. Ms. Bartley suggested putting out an email to legislators soliciting ads. Ms. Appleton reminded everyone again about the program book deadline of April 1. Please ask unions, law firms, local candidates and others who might be interested in supporting the DRC to place an ad. Ads that are camera ready can be send to Suzanne Coogan, suz.coogan@icloud.com.

It was suggested that the new statewide congressional district map be printed in the program book. Lynne Boecher asked if any of the authors Ms. Hunter mentioned could be asked to run a session, but it is too late in the process to change sessions or line up speakers for this year.

Ms. Dodds reminded everybody that April 4 is the deadline for booking discounted rooms at \$150/night. Initially there were not enough rooms reserved for Thursday night, but that has been fixed.

Nominating Committee

No report.

By-Laws Committee

No report.

Communications and Outreach

No report.

Issues Committee

This committee needs a new chair. Ms. Hunter mentioned CO₂ fracking as an important current topic. Mr. Perfetti said Assemblywoman Anna Kelles has been leading on that issue. In the chat, Joan Davis mentioned that a bill against the practice has passed both houses of the legislature and is headed to the Governor's desk.

Political Committee: Tim Perfetti

Mr. Perfetti gave a brief recap of our three days in Albany for the January DRC Advocacy Days. We got a positive hearing on all our issues, including rural broadband, blocking the sale of wine in grocery stores to support small liquor stores and wineries, restoring CHIPS funding, and election reform.

On election reform we have made subsequent progress with the Magnarelli/Breslin bills to provide an alternative path to petitioning, working with Jobim Steyermaek in Senator Breslin's office. The legislation would allow county committees to nominate candidates, with a 25% weighted vote putting a candidate on the ballot, just as the state committee does for statewide candidates. Petitioning would remain an option for any candidate not receiving 25% or not wishing to work through their county committee. New York City and counties contiguous with it would be carved out of the bill. Petitioning for county committee seats would remain (since a committee can't appoint itself) and most likely for state committee as well. Caucusing for town committees that use it would not change. Mr. Perfetti reports that Senate leadership is interested in and receptive to the bill.

Ms. Hunter urged board members to appeal to their legislators about how hard petitioning has gotten upstate since it moved to March. She believes that county party conventions would strengthen county committees and make participation more exciting. James Carr spoke in favor of petitioning.

Next meeting

The next board meeting will be held Saturday April 27, immediately following the conclusion of the conference at the Crowne Plaza Desmond Hotel in Albany. Ms. Hunter reminded prospective board members that they should also plan to attend if elected.

Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Thickstun

Secretary, Democratic Rural Conference