

Democratic Rural Conference  
DRC Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
Saturday July 27, 2024  
Lincklaen House, Cazenovia

The meeting was called to order by Judith Hunter at approximately 10 am.

**Board members in attendance**

Maggie Bartley	Max Della Pia	Judith Hunter
John Hurley	Ron McDougall	Michael Monescalchi
James Mills	Liz Moran	Michael Plitt
Roger Saltman	Tom Schimmerling	Bill Thickstun
Ted Young		

**Board members not in attendance**

Cindy Appleton	Darlene Baker	Kimberly Davis
Bill Hughes	Michael Zagrobelny	

**Other attendees**

Joan Davis	Brien Connolly	Summer Downing
Kay Friedlander	Rick Gell	Margie Lawlor
Jeff Lewis	Jamal Malik	Bay Malik
Margaret Milman-Barris	Betsy Passer	Maggie Peterson
Joe Samson	Kelli Samson	

**Approval of Minutes (Bill Thickstun)**

Ron McDougall moved and Ted Young seconded approval of the April 27, 2024 Board Meeting minutes. Passed unanimously.

**Nominating Committee**

In the absence of Dan Farfaglia, Nominating Committee chair, Judith Hunter conducted the election to replace Executive Vice Chair Tim Perfetti, who has resigned to take a state position working for NYS Comptroller Tom DiNapoli. Candidate Liz Moran spoke briefly, promising to take on Tim's role in organizing the DRC state leg advocacy days in early 2025. Dia Carabajal, who also had submitted a statement of interest, was not in attendance. The 13 board members present, voting by secret ballot, elected Liz.

This election creates an opening in Liz's old position of Central Region Vice Chair. Parliamentarian Darlene Baker will also leave the board in September, as she will no longer be a state committee member. Both positions will need to be filled by Board election at the fall meeting.

### **Chair's Report (Judith Hunter)**

Judith made a motion that the DRC Board vote to endorse Kamala Harris for President. Max Della Pia seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Judith mentioned a conversation with Bre Maxwell, who works with rural coalitions at the DNC and is looking to do programming in our counties. We have 15 counties in NY-21, 9 (of which 8 are DRC counties) in NY-23, and 13 in NY-24 that are receiving no resources from the DCCC or the state party. John Hurley found it troubling that on a recent county chair call, counties in those districts were asked to send volunteers and resources to swing districts. Congressional candidates in our rural districts are expected to pay \$8500 for VAN access. Judith said that the lack of state support means we need to support each other. The change at the top of the ticket should help down ballot races. Maggie Bartley asked for a statement from the board on this subject, and Judith said we could workshop one via email.

Jane Dodds and Judith will work to arrange a Zoom call with Howard Dean, who championed a 50-state strategy as DNC chair.

The DRC has received a \$3000 grant from Act Blue. In exchange, we agree to host two Zoom trainings before the election. Our contact there is Jamil Siddiqui. It was proposed that we look to schedule those trainings on Sunday evenings that are not football nights.

Next year will be the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the DRC. We plan to celebrate that event at the conference and invite and honor the surviving founders. Judith will contact the Governor's office about planning for the opening reception to be at the Governor's Mansion (as her staff had proposed for this year). With enough lead time, we can schedule around it. As the Albany Hilton is closer to the mansion than the Crowne Plaza/Desmond, it would be a more convenient location. In the past the Governor's staff have offered to pay to bus people to the mansion; the Hilton is close enough that some attendees might want to walk. Max Della Pia moved and Ron McDougall seconded that we contract with the Albany Hilton for the 2025 conference, April 25-26. It passed unanimously. We will need to have a Plan B in case the mansion reception doesn't work out, and if it does, the conference may need to run into Saturday afternoon, as getting to the mansion and back will take up a Friday programming slot.

Judith said that we need to reconstitute our standing committees. Political chair Tim Perfetti and Issues chair Keith Batman have left the board. Bylaws chair Darlene Baker will leave the board in September. Chair of Communication and Outreach Bill Thickstun has moved on to be Secretary. Liz was going to fill that slot, but she has now become Executive Vice Chair. Jane Dodds will continue to chair the Conference committee with Summer Downing's help, Treasurer John Hurley will chair a Finance and Audit Committee which is taking shape, but the others are entirely vacant now.

Maggie Bartley asked about access to legal counsel. Tim was working on that project. Judith will ask him to transfer his list. The New York Democratic Lawyer's Council (NYDLC) is now more integrated with the state committee. Tom Schimmerling offered some suggestions of people who might be able to help, including Theo Harris at the NYDLC. The DRC has no operating budget to fund legal services, but Judith can forward requests for help from county chairs who need to connect with attorneys.

### **Treasurer's Report (John Hurley)**

John explained that since former Treasurer Frank Puglisi fell seriously ill last fall, it has been difficult to get records pulled back together. For the state BOE transition to run smoothly, Frank would have needed to resign, which

he is still unable to do. John has been working with them and with the Federal Elections Commission for the Federal PAC account. He has transferred our funds from the Franklinville Community bank to Key Bank, which has branches statewide. He and Judith are both signatories on that account and have online access.

#### Key Bank Operating Account

Starting Balance February 29, 2024					\$100.00
Transfer from Community Bank				\$5,400.00	\$5,500.00
Deposits					
	March	\$14,853.78			
	April	\$25,804.17			
	May	\$6,938.83			
	June	\$0.00			
	July	\$190.56	\$47,787.34		\$53,287.34
Disbursements					
(See Appendix)	May	\$26,790.40			
	June	\$617.25			
	July	\$800.00	\$28,207.65		\$28,207.65
Balance at July 15, 2024					\$25,079.69

#### Key Bank PAC Account

Starting Balance February 29, 2024					\$25.00
Transfer from Community Bank				\$18,323.59	
Deposits				\$0.00	
Disbursements				\$0.00	
Balance at July 15, 2024					\$18,348.59

Because a question was raised at the conference about how the fees were being spent, John has provided a more detailed expense report than has been done in the past for the period February 29, 2024 to July 15, 2024.

Payment Date					
February			\$0.00		
March			\$0.00		
April			\$0.00		
14-May-24	Conference Hotel Invoice			\$26,790.40	

	LVD Projector Pkg		\$1,810.00		
	Wired Podium Microphone Pkg		\$280.00		
	Speaker Sound System		\$200.00		
	Computer Adapter Kit		\$75.00		
	Wireless Microphone		\$87.50		
	Support Set Up Labor		\$825.00		
	Service Charge		\$490.50		
	Sales Tax		\$235.44		\$4,003.44
	4/26 Dinner	195 @ \$49.00	\$9,555.00		
		Service Chg	\$1,911.00		
		Sales Tax	\$917.28		\$12,383.28
	4/26 BoD Work Room	12 @ 32.00	\$384.00		
		Service Chg	\$76.80		
		Sales Tax	\$36.86		\$497.66
	4/26 King St. Ballroom	Rental	\$1,500.00		
		Service Chg	\$300.00		
		Sales Tax	\$144.00		\$1,944.00
	4/27 Luncheon	155 @ \$35.00	\$5,425.00		
		Service Chg	\$1,085.00		
		Sales Tax	\$520.80		\$7,030.80
	4/27 Conf. Coffee/Tea	10 Gal. @ \$95.00 Gallon	\$950.00		
		Service Chg	\$190.01		
		Sales Tax	\$91.20		\$1,231.21
	4/27 Credit				-\$300.00
		Detail Total			\$26,790.39
6/3/2024	Neon			\$617.25	
7/3/2024	DRC Program Design			\$800.00	

Ron moved to accept the Treasurer's report and to thank John and Judith for all the work they have done to get here. Michael Plitt seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

### **Allocating Conference Proceeds**

In allocating the conference proceeds back to the counties, the principle has been that the DRC treats all counties equally. We need to hold on to \$6000 to \$7000 for operating expenses: this lunch, monthly fees for the Neon database, deposits for the 2025 conference. That leaves around \$20,000 in the state account to spend on allocations. Split among the 46 counties that have paid their dues, \$425 each would come to \$19,550. John moved and Liz seconded that we authorize that amount. It passed unanimously. John promised that checks would go out to counties as soon as possible.

To allocate the Federal PAC money, the same principle of treating all counties equally should apply. It's not our job to say that some candidates can't win. But in some cases counties include more than one Congressional district, and many districts continue into non-DRC counties. Michael Plitt has created a matrix of DRC counties and districts to manage these allocations. Democratic candidates in DRC districts will receive 1/47th of our PAC funds for each DRC county within that district. If a DRC county is split among 2 (or, in the case of Niagara, 3) congressional districts, their 1/47th share will be split proportionately. Judith moved that we divide the Federal PAC on this basis, Tom seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. Judith noted that a county can give at most \$1000 in all Federal races in a calendar year. Also, we need to remind Representatives Joe Morelle and Tim Kennedy that they do represent rural counties (as do Paul Tonko and Pat Ryan).

### **Software and Services Proposal (Rick Gell)**

After a break for lunch, Rick updated the board on three interconnected software solutions designed to upgrade organizational infrastructure at the County and Caucus level: 1) the Democratic Civic Network (DCN), a private professional social network like LinkedIn or Facebook, 2) the State Party web template, and 3) the Democratic County Manager (DCM), a membership management tool customized for the Democratic Party that resides behind the other two.

The state committee has agreed to fund the web template for County Committees if they want it. We are urging them also to fund it for the DRC, the Progressive Caucus, and the other caucuses. Rick's team is currently providing the DCN and the DCM at no charge. There is now also a phone app for the DCN.

This infrastructure provides several important benefits: first, privacy, in that personal emails are stored only in the database and don't appear on any public-facing web pages, where people are represented by "handles". That way, emails don't become targets for scammers as has happened to Judith and others among us. Second, the DCM database already contains the county and state committee structure (all 13,000 election districts), which is

designed to be populated and maintained with individual seat holders by county chairs or their designees. That makes it a better fit for county committees, the state committee, and the DRC than off-the-shelf products like Neon which are not designed with our committee structure in mind.

Third, there's now a support team in place: Rick, Dave Kopachek, who wrote the DCM software, Ed Reed of Livingston County (who coordinated the Livingston site and others), and Bay Malik of Chemung, who was in attendance and spoke in favor of the project. They have also been working with Kelleigh McKenzie in Ulster County. Livingston and Chemung counties are among the ten counties that have adopted the state web template, if people want to see how it looks. The Progressive Caucus is ready to adopt the web site and the DCM/DCN in parallel with the DRC. As more counties and caucuses come on board, the Democratic Party across the state will start to acquire a common look.

Judith and her husband Bob currently maintain and pay for the DRC web site personally, which is not a good long-term strategy. Adopting the state web template and the County Manager to populate it would take most of this burden off them and put us into an environment with an existing support team. It would also make beta testing the DCN an option. It might, in the long term, enable us to move away from Neon. John Hurley made a motion to move our web site to the state party template and the Democratic County Manager. Roger Saltman seconded, and it passed unanimously.

### **New Business**

Max Della Pia announced a Tioga County pig roast for \$50 on August 1, which Tom DiNapoli will attend.

A motion to adjourn was made by Ted Young at around 1:45 pm, had multiple seconds, and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Thickstun

Secretary, Democratic Rural Conference