

Democratic Rural Conference
DRC Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Sunday November 24, 2024
Zoom

The meeting was called to order by Judith Hunter at 7 pm.

Board members in attendance

Cindy Appleton	Maggie Bartley	Max Della Pia	Bill Hughes
Judith Hunter	Hohn Hurley	Ron McDougall	Liz Moran
Michael Plitt	Roger Saltman	Tom Schimmerling	Bill Thickstun
Ted Young	Mike Zagrobelny		

Board members not in attendance

James Mills

Other attendees

Keith Batman	Lynne Boecher	Betsy Briggs	Bekkie Bryan
Jason Clark	Joan Davis	Martha Delaney	Jane Dodds
Summer Downing	Dan Farfaglia	Cassie Forbus	Ben Guthrie
Sam Hodge	Vivian James	Dan Lamb	Bill Liblick
Hal McCabe	Lori Orestano-James	James Renfrew	Barb Turpin
Rachel Weil			

Approval of Minutes (Bill Thickstun)

Minutes of the July 27, 2024 board meeting were approved at the general membership meeting on September 25, 2024. The September minutes were distributed to the board for their information but can't be approved until the next general membership meeting. As a result, there was no action to be taken on minutes.

Treasurer's Report (John Hurley)

Key Bank Operating Account

Starting Balance September 24, 2024						\$3,242.41
Deposits						
						\$0.00
Disbursements						
	Neon	2 months		\$318.04		
	Zoom	Annual		\$169.90		
	Service Chg			\$25.00		
						\$512.94
Balance at November 22, 2024						\$2,729.47

Key Bank PAC Account

Starting Balance at September 24, 2024						\$75.42
Deposits						
Disbursements:						
	Service Charge			\$10.00		\$10.00
Balance at November 22, 2024						\$65.42

John explained that he is calling the bank about the service charges which, as he understands it, should not have been assessed.

Ted Young moved and Bill Hughes seconded accepting the Treasurer's report, which passed unanimously.

Nominating Committee (Dan Farfaglia)

Seven candidates for five vacant board positions had submitted statements of interest in advance of the meeting: Dia Carabajal for Parliamentarian, Roger Saltman and Hal McCabe for Central Region Vice Chair, Sam Hodge

and Cari Gardner for Catskill/Hudson Region Vice Chair, Karen Ash and Summer Downing for the two vacant board positions. Candidates present on the call addressed the board briefly. After some discussion about procedure, board members submitted their choices for the contested positions via direct Zoom chat messages to Dan Farfaglia. Later in the meeting Dan reported that the winners were Roger Saltman for Central Vice Chair and Sam Hodge for Catskill/Hudson. At the suggestion of Lori Orestano-James, the secretary cast a single ballot for the two winning candidates and the three who were unopposed, which passed unanimously. Chair Hunter thanked all the candidates for stepping up to run.

This election creates an open board seat in Roger Saltman's old position which will need to be filled at the next meeting. All these positions will come up for re-election at the general membership meeting in April.

Chair's Report (Judith Hunter)

Judith reminded the attendees that Act Blue will hold a second session for us on Tuesday, December 3, 2024 via Zoom, which candidates and treasurers should be encouraged to attend. Particularly for county and town positions nominated by petition, the time to be recruiting 2025 candidates is now. With the new political calendar, there's no downtime over the holidays, and it's important that we offer voters choices even in Republican areas.

The state party delivered in the swing districts, where we flipped three congressional seats. Other areas suffered a lack of resources from that concentration of effort. Biden carried New York by 23%, Harris by only half that, at around 11.5%. Because there were issues downstate with turnout and Republicans gaining ground, our job in the rural counties has become even more important.

2024 Election

Judith opened an extended discussion on the 2024 election by posing a question to the group about whether the coordinated campaign worked. The general consensus was yes, though people raised a number of local concerns.

NY-21 Special Election

If Elise Stephanik is appointed to the cabinet as expected, the Governor will have 10 days from when she resigns her congressional seat to call a special election, which then needs to be held within 70-80 days. There will be no primary. Candidates will be nominated by a weighted vote of the 15 county chairs in the district.

Judith noted that a special election is very different creature from a regular race. Historically, Democrats have done better in these, notably in the 2009 election of Bill Owens in most of the current NY-21 region, and the 2011 congressional election of Kathy Hochul in western New York. Jane Dodds mentioned that in 2011 Kathy Hochul ran on proposed Republican cuts to Medicare, which may be an issue again this year.

Given the tight margin in the House, it seems likely that the DCCC will get involved in the race, which it did not do this year. Jason Clark indicated that the north country will need and welcome help and that rural New York needs to stand together.

Judith said that the DRC could help funnel people onto doors. She also noted, however, that we spent our Federal PAC money down almost to zero this year, as was necessary and appropriate. But we could fundraise up to \$5,000 to replenish the fund and help the eventual candidate. Act Blue cannot create a generic nominee fund for an unknown candidate, but we could fill that need through our existing PAC.

Conference Committee Report (Jane Dodds)

The conference will be April 26-27. Jane reported that she has signed the contract with the Albany Hilton and thanked Summer Downing for stepping up to help her with the conference this year. Judith is negotiating with the Governor's staff on a possible opening reception at the Governor's Mansion. It will be the 30th anniversary of the DRC. She has been speaking with rural leaders in Minnesota and Michigan to see if we can bring in someone to discuss what we can learn from other states.

2025 Advocacy Days (Liz Moran/Judith Hunter)

Liz met last week with Tim Perfetti to get advice on the logistics of building the advocacy schedule and his list of legislators and staff to contact. Likely dates are Monday through Wednesday, either the week of January 19, January 27 or February 3. The group then discussed possible issues to target this year:

- 1) Petition reform (such as Magnarelli/Breslin bill from the last session)
- 2) Failure to pass new bottle bill hurting rural recycling businesses
- 3) Need for changes in school funding (Lori Orestano-James)
- 4) Rural broadband and cell service
- 5) Chips for water and sewer infrastructure (Mike Zagrobelny)
- 6) Foreign drivers licensing issues for farm workers (Bekkie Bryan).

Judith will work on refining this list down to 2-4 items.

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for Sunday, January 12, 2025 at 7pm on Zoom.

Ted Young motioned that we adjourn, Cindy Appleton seconded, and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Thickstun

Secretary, Democratic Rural Conference