

August 10, 2020 Minutes

Rutland County Democrats Committee

Zoom Meeting, 7:00 p.m. – 8:20 p.m.

The Rutland County Democratic Committee Meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Heather Juliussen-Stevenson. Meeting was held on Zoom video/phone.

1. **Report from the Secretary:** The minutes from the June 2020 meeting have been posted online and a link sent with the notice of this meeting. Heather shared the minutes on her screen. Motion to approve made and seconded. Minutes from June 2020 approved unanimously.
2. **Treasurer's Report:** Heather reported the checks to all the house candidates have been just sent. Senate candidate checks will go out after primary. Please let us know if more is needed. No current plans for another fundraising push. Castleton Indivisible will share candidate funding links. Scott reported a balance of \$10,821. Checks for \$4,000 have gone out to Representative candidates. Most have not been cashed. A total of approximately \$8,500 will go out, including Senate candidate checks. Have received donations totaling \$11,745 since the beginning of the year.
3. **New Business:**

Dave Silberman – Addison County Delegate to the State Convention, running for Addison Co. High Bailiff - The Vermont State Democrats have asked him to present the initial draft of the platform. There will be an upcoming platform convention on Zoom, Sat., Sept 12. Rutland County can send delegates and alternate delegates. The deadline is this Thursday, August 13th, for Town and County Committees to submit the names of their designated delegates to the 2020 Platform Convention. County Committees may also designate an additional 4 delegates, and Town Chairs may designate 1 delegate from their town. Please send these names to Scott McNeil smcneil@vtdemocrats.org.

Heather circulated the draft platform on the weekend. Dave would like feedback by August 27th. Does the draft reflect our essential values? It will be looked at by a professional editor to correct any usage errors. The committee will meet on the 27th. Delegates to the convention will provide grassroots input. To provide platform feedback: VTDems2020Platform@googlegroups.com

The platform is an expression of desires, but not marching orders for our representatives. It looks at a medium and long term timeline in moving the party forward.

Heather asked about the High Bailiff position. This is a unique position to VT. Every county has a High Bailiff. The High Bailiff is the only elected person who can arrest the Sheriff. This allows for civilian oversight of the police.

Dave discussed the prison-for-profit in Mississippi that houses about 220 Vermont prisoners. CoreCivic, which runs this institution, is paid millions of dollars for this work. About 2/3 of our prisoners have tested positive for COVID. The state needs to enforce protocols to protect our

prisoners. A discussion was held about keeping our prisoners in Vermont. We do have prisoners who are eligible for release, but aren't being released don't have housing. Liz Filiskov suggested looking up the national group, Local Progress, for more information on working toward social justice: <https://localprogress.org/>

Updates from Candidates:

Rep. Stephanie Jerome – In light of the pandemic, she will not be door knocking. She will be returning to the legislature soon to work on budget and other issues. She's also reaching out through media posts and some outdoor social distance meetings at the library. She may do 2 postcard mailings. She is currently working to notify constituents about available COVID funds. Heather offered our help with postcards. Ballots will be mailed out by the end of September, so the bulk of campaigning should be completed by mid-October. Heather offered to advertise events.

We discussed the recent *Rutland Herald* changes that will now be charging for letters in support of candidates and placing these letters in different areas of the paper, not the editorial page. This new *Herald* policy hurts the community by limiting access to candidates and elected officials. We discussed possibly writing the *Herald* a letter after the elections regarding the change and including signatures by state and local officials, and sending a copy to *VT Digger*, etc.

Rep. Will Notte – Will is finishing up his first term. He previously was Rutland Alderman for 6 terms. He can walk his ward, but isn't going door-to-door this year in light of the pandemic. He's using Facebook to reach constituents and explains his votes in the *Herald*, *VT Digger*, and Facebook. The *Herald* may charge for this now.

There is limited time to plan a campaign since the legislators are going back into session and people will probably be voting early by mail.

There is some very negative campaigning going on. We need to draw the contrast between some far-right Republicans and the Democrats. The most helpful thing anyone can do is amplify our candidates. Liz encouraged us all to use social media to share information and support our candidates.

Diane Alberts asked for some talking points so she can write letters to the editor. Liz said that she also has people willing to write letters if she's contacted.

Heather asked about the best places and day/times to stand for honk and waves. If candidates have recommendations, Heather and Liz will schedule these.

Liz discussed volunteering to help count ballots and stuff envelopes in the town clerks' offices. Anyone who is interested in volunteering is encouraged to do so. We discussed concerns about the slow-down of the mail and attempts to privatize the post office. Ballots can be dropped off directly with the town clerk. We need to ensure that voters know about all the options for voting.

PEG TV is available for candidate spotlights and it's free.

Senate Candidate Larry Courcelle – Larry is participating in a steering committee on economic recovery from the pandemic. He looks forward to the challenge. Postcards are critical in all campaigns, and they need to go out early. Ballots need to be filled out and turned into the town clerk early.

Rep. Mary Howard – Mary doesn't currently have an opponent. She has been calling constituents and will probably do a postcard or letter after the primary.

Adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Wright

Recording Secretary