

**February 8, 2021 Minutes**  
**Rutland County Democrats Committee**  
**Zoom Meeting, 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.**

The Rutland County Democratic Committee Meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Heather Juliussen-Stevenson. Meeting was held on Zoom video/phone.

1. **Report from the Secretary:** The minutes from the December 2020 meeting were sent with the meeting notice on 1/22/21. Motion to approve December minutes made and seconded. Minutes from December 2020 approved unanimously.

2. **Treasurer's Report:** Scott Garren reported that our balance is very low. Expenses include a \$200 donation to Stacey Abrams' efforts to mobilize voters in Georgia, \$37.50 for the purchase of checks, and \$2,500 spent on purchasing voter file (VAN) access for municipal candidates. The latter will be benefiting candidates in the Mill River School District as well as the Rutland Forward candidates for Alderman and School Board in Rutland City. We need to support Town Meeting Day candidates in key races because 1) the Republicans are always doing so, 2) some really extremist right wing candidates are running in this election, 3) we need to fill local offices in order to build up the bench for higher offices, and 4) local officials need to represent our values because they often have a bigger impact on our day-to-day lives than higher officials.

The recommended reserve amount is \$2,000. We need to ramp up our fundraising.

**New Business:**

1. **Review the bylaws** – The bylaws do not require revision at this time.

2. **Legislative Updates:**

Sen. Cheryl Hooker – Cheryl reported that the most pressing issues at the moment are related to COVID-19. We are waiting for federal funding. Her committees are just beginning to get to other issues; including the possibility of banning school resource officers, working on the education pension fund, improving literacy outcomes, and healthcare reform.

Rep. Mary Howard – Mary works on the General Housing and Military Affairs Committees. She has also been working on housing issues related to the pandemic (including hotel occupancy), veteran housing, and legislation covering insurance negotiations, unemployment, and housing safety. Homeless Awareness Day was on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Rep. Stephanie Jerome – The teacher/state employee pension fund is one of the biggest issues that Stephanie has been working on; the Speaker of the House is meeting with legislators and the union on a plan for moving forward. Stephanie is also working on finding money for new businesses that haven't been eligible for the funds that have been helping older businesses during the pandemic. Finally, Stephanie worked on having Brandon successfully pass the declaration of inclusion that was previously passed in Pittsford.

Rep. Will Notte – Will thanked former Rep. Robin Chesnut-Tangerman for his past work and his current campaign for Select Board. This is Will's second term in the Judiciary Committee. He has joined the House Democrats Communications Team. Writing Op Eds and getting his thoughts out to the public helped ensure his re-election in November. Will anticipates important votes on bail reform, excessive use of force by law enforcement, and revisiting the issue of removing firearms from someone who has an emergency Relief from Abuse order (currently, firearms can be removed if there is a *permanent* Relief from Abuse order).

Cheryl discussed two recent votes to overturn executive orders of the governor: an executive order to put Public Safety under statewide oversight, and an executive order to move decisions on Act 250 out of the local arena and under the control of a statewide body. Cheryl explained that both issues are under the purview of the legislature, and are already being worked on. She emphasized the importance of allowing the process to work as intended.

**3. Local town engagement** – Heather noted the importance of supporting candidates for Town Meeting Day. She thanked the candidates for running and thanked Liz Filskov, in particular, for her work on this.

Heather will be adding Robin Chesnut-Tangerman to the list of Town Meeting Day candidates we're promoting. Anyone who has new names to add to this list should contact Heather.

To volunteer or to donate to Town Meeting Day candidates, Heather recommended going to the candidates' web page, which is included on the Candidates page of the Rutland County Democrats' website.

Kevin Burgess ([kburgess@vtDemocrats.org](mailto:kburgess@vtDemocrats.org) - 802-373-1402) of the Vermont Democratic Party (VDP) discussed 251 in '21, a new initiative to encourage local engagement. Most town committees aren't very active, and Kevin believes this is because they lack infrastructure and resources. The VDP is committed to changing this, beginning with trainings targeted for town and county Democrats. To learn more about this, go to: [www.vtdems.us/training](http://www.vtdems.us/training) All trainings and slides will be posted and accessible on YouTube.

On Saturday, Feb. 13th - 1:00 PM, Senator Balint will be hosting a discussion about her experience: *Courageous Leadership: The Power of Vulnerability and Authenticity* <https://www.mobilize.us/vtdems/event/373401/>

The group discussed holding a Zoom speaker series. Windsor County wants to collaborate with us on something like this.

The group discussed the importance of encouraging Democrats to attend their local Select Board or Aldermen meetings. Michael Talbott will share the link to attend the Rutland City Board of Aldermen meetings with us.

Stephanie discussed thanking candidates who ran, but weren't elected and keeping them involved with the party. We can benefit from their energy and experience. We need to keep the momentum going forward.

Mary Bilz mentioned a candidate she's interested in for the Select Board in Wallingford. Mary will ask them to send their information to Heather. Mary is also interested in presenting the declaration of inclusion for Wallingford. Heather will send the text via email to Mary. We hope that these grassroots efforts will strengthen local engagement.

4. **Fundraising in preparation for the 2022 elections** – We are doing a fundraising letter. And we need to be prepared to hold a live in-person event later this year, even if it's socially distanced.

Fundraising letters don't usually go out before March. Heather asked for the names of any donor that we may not have on our list. Cheryl discussed a recent Zoom fundraiser that was very successful for the Senate. They had a good speaker, a large group, it was a lot of fun. If we could come up with a theme, we could raise a fair amount of money.

5. **Upcoming events** – Heather discussed upcoming events.

6. **Other** – Nora discussed right wing push back on Front Porch Forum (FPF) when Robin ran for the House. Heather will ask the VDP if anything has been done about this issue.

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Wright

Recording Secretary