

April 12, 2021 Minutes

Rutland County Democrats Committee

Zoom Meeting, 7:05 p.m. – 8:00 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.

Moment of silence for Honorable Peter Hall, who recently passed. If you wish to donate, donations may be made to the VT Bar Association or Yale School of Medicine (New Haven, CT), designated to the Jim McNiff Fund for Kidney Cancer Research.

Report from the Secretary: The minutes from the February 2021 meeting were sent with the meeting notice. Motion to approve February minutes made and seconded. Minutes approved unanimously.

Report from the Treasurer: Eugenia read the Treasurer's Report. As of 4/12/21, the closing balance was \$819.98. Income of \$1,483.60. Expenses of \$2,629.87, including GoDaddy webhosting and the Vermont Democratic Party (VDP) voter list for municipal elections.

The fundraising letter has been approved. Discussion about purchasing supplies. Kathy hand-addressed everything last year. Mary, Carol, Kathy, and Heather can help address and write notes. Eugenia will get a quote on printing. Heather thanked Rutland City Alderman Thomas Franco for writing a blurb for our fundraising letter.

New Business

1. Legislative Updates:

Sen. Cheryl Hooker – Have passed crossover. Now will work on bills from house and committees. Should adjourn in mid-May. Waiting for guidelines on recovery act funds. Working on issues like literacy and mental health. Have done considerable work on child care, a big issue in Rutland County. Looking at what will happen with healthcare in next 5 years. Lots of other issues—environmental, weatherization, bottle bills, Fish and Wildlife board changes. It's been a busy session, and challenging on Zoom. Hearing from constituents. Just passed Constitutional amendments for Prop 5 and 2. Both go to the House next and then on to the electorate in 2022, if they pass the House.

Rep. Mary Howard – General Housing and Military Affairs Committee. Have been working on the eviction moratorium. Switching from health officer to director of fire safety. Also working on a bill to establish a registry to help consumers look for reputable contractors. Arbitrations for employees of the Vermont Judiciary. The Workers Caucus is involved in talking about pensions. Has heard from many constituents. Has put forward some of the Caucus' suggestions.

Rep. Stephanie Jerome – House Commerce and Economic Development Committee. Focusing on COVID relief for small businesses. Has passed a bill to help businesses survive. They will be allocating 10 million to small businesses who missed the last deadline. Federal money will be coming to Vermont. They will work on this for the next 6 weeks. For municipalities, funds may be based on population. Funds will be a one-time payment, to be used over 4 years. There will be some rules for spending. Good time to improve our infrastructure and to fund programs which need help.

Sen. Hooker said the money going to the towns is above and beyond what goes to the state. She discussed bills to address school funding and school meals (to connect farmers with schools). Most of the funding will relate to COVID.

Rep. Jerome said it's an exciting time and could mean big changes for our communities. Broadband is also coming.

Kathy Hall expressed appreciation to our legislators for their hard work during this challenging time.

2. Candidate Reports from Recent Election:

Thomas Franco – Rutland City Board of Aldermen – It was an interesting election. Four people from the Rutland Forward group were elected. Voter turnout was less than expected. Discussion regarding how to get people out to vote. Lots of momentum around the inclusivity message. We're at a turning point and are being asked to state our values and unify.

Anna Tadio – School Board Candidate – Anna said that she felt that she had community support. The mascot was a singular issue. Working with other candidates to get the word out by flyers, phone banking, etc., went well. We need to work together to get the word out to the community. She hopes to run again.

Thomas Franco said that the phone calls made a big impact. He had two phone banks and used the VDP's data. He made hundreds of calls, which made a big difference. He thanked the Democrats for the resources.

Discussion as to the challenges of making phone calls on behalf of a long list of candidates. Calling for just one or two people works better.

Sen. Hooker—This was a very stressful campaign. Hopefully we can go door-to-door next time.

Rep. Howard said that her campaign manager told her to make phone calls, and she had some great conversations. Going door-to-door worked well pre-COVID. It was missed.

Discussion as to why progressive candidates made inroads on Board of Aldermen but not the School Board in Rutland City. Name recognition, deep roots in community, and visible Herald endorsements were helpful.

Other:

Sen. Hooker gave an update on S.37, a bill regarding the reconstitution of the Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees and the development of a restructuring plan and tuition program for the Vermont State Colleges. The committee has come up with some benchmarks they expect to meet in this merger. There is still debate going on. Need to have transparency in the use of funds. Looks like single governance right now, with one president for 3 institutions.

Discussion as to concerns about the names of the institutions that will be covered by S.37. Some employees feel that the Board of Governors has not been representative or responsive. Hope to have better representation for staff and students.

Heather reminded candidates and representatives to reach out to us regarding any issues they would like the Rutland County Democrats to be working on. The interviews for the VDP State Executive

Director have been completed (4 candidates). Interviews for the Grassroots Liaison will start. Heather is on the committee for the latter.

Mary Droege (Castleton Indivisible) was recently on a call with Vermont Indivisible groups and Rep. Peter Welch. 75 people attended. The Indivisible groups across Vermont have a meeting scheduled with Sen. Bernie Sanders, on 4/26, at 5:30 p.m. Sen. Hooker suggested that Indivisible could be important for Prop. 5 when it comes to the voters.

Mary asked whether the state is continuing the Town Reorganization work begun under Kevin Burgess. Sen. Hooker will bring this up with the VDP. Suggestion to wait for the new hire and bring it up after a couple of weeks.

Sen. Hooker - The Senate has two interns who are helping talk about the bills that are out. Go to the Senate Democratic page to find out about the bills passed out of every committee. You can check it out every week. If you have any questions, contact Sen. Hooker.

Upcoming events –

Green Up Day – Saturday, May 1st. Go online for information or contact Carol. Take pictures to share with Heather.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Wright

Recording Secretary