

Rutland County Democrats Committee Meeting

Monday, February 21, 2022, 7:00 p.m. - 8:20

Zoom/Phone

The Rutland County Democrats Committee meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Anna Tadio. Noah French is unable to attend. Meeting was held on Zoom and also by phone.

Report from the Secretary: Minutes of the Rutland County Democrats Committee meeting from December 13, 2021 were sent out for review with the meeting notice. Motion to approve minutes made and seconded. All in favor, none opposed.

Report from the Treasurer: Eugenia Cooke reported that the account balance is \$4,495.19. There has been no activity. End of the year contributions have slowed.

New Business:

Legislative Reports:

Rep. Stephanie Jerome - Commerce Committee is working on workforce issues. Since the pandemic there are fewer people working, due to many issues. There are also a record number of new business starts. They are looking at the nursing shortage crisis. Hope to address salaries of nurse educators in order to double the size of nursing class programs, student tuition reimbursement, salary issues. They hope to use some of the recent federal money.

Also looking at barriers with retirees who may want to return to work, pension issues, career and technical education if students don't have other plans after high school. Looking at more adult career path training.

Rep. William Notte – Redistricting work. S-30 (ban firearms in hospitals) is on the Gov's desk. It passed out of the Senate. Five amendments were added in the House. The most important will close the Charleston loophole. This bill passed through the House and Senate and is on the Gov's desk until Tuesday. This bill would help save lives in the state.

Sen. Cheryl Hooker – Thanked Will for his work on S-30. She is doing workforce issue work similar to Stephanie, in the Health and Welfare committee. They also continue to work on pandemic flexibility issues and mental health bills, such as peer support certification and peer respite centers. A third bill would be for grants for after school mental health supports for students and staff.

Education—working on issues of church and state. Allowing tuition money for schools if they don't discriminate or use public funds for religious reasons. Research is needed into what our state and federal constitutions say.

The mascot bill has gone through several iterations. This would determine where the authority lies in determining mascots to be the face of the school. The residency requirement for new immigrants would be waived in the miscellaneous ed bill. The shared governance bill would ask for an expansion of the boards for the Vermont State college/university system to include faculty and staff for Vermont state college system.

Weighting – the task force voted out a proposal that would have carved out English language learners with a categorical grant. People in the Rutland area were not in favor. They wanted ELL to be treated as the other factors (poverty, etc.). This would help those schools with fewer students. On their way to an agreement.

Elections:

Will discussed redistricting. In the upcoming State elections, our districts will look different. The maps are being worked on. It needs to go through the approval process. Rutland County looks settled. Due to our loss of people, Rutland will lose a representative. This also happened 10 years ago and prior to that. We need to work on our population.

Since Fair Haven and Castleton are being separated, we will have a wide-open district in Castleton, with no incumbent. Stephanie will have her own district in Brandon. Proctor is being combined with Pittsford.

Lines are changing in Rutland City and Town. Numerous changes to Rutland’s neighboring towns. We need to find candidates for Rutland Town and Wallingford. There are opportunities and challenges.

Mary Droege, Chair of Castleton Dem Com—priority is finding a good candidate. Mary spoke about the get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts of Castleton Indivisible (CI). CI is a chapter of a national group, active for 5 years. Its volunteers represent all of Rutland County. They work on Dem and Progressive issues; mainly focusing on GOTV activities during election years. Goal this year is to build capacity for GOTV efforts by training volunteers for door-to-door canvassing. CI canvassed in 2018 and are eager to get out again. The national group is developing training. Hope to collaborate with Dem candidates and Rights and Democracy. They also have volunteers who do post cards, and some phone banking.

Lt. Gov. Molly Gray, Running for US House – Molly discussed the upcoming races in VT and the importance of building a strong Democratic party. We need to unify and get out people out. She congratulated our candidates for running and thanked us for inviting her.

Molly discussed her political background which started in 2006 working for Peter Welch’s campaign. She moved to D.C. and helped build his office. They worked to be deeply responsive to Vermonters. She has also worked with congressional staffers. She worked for the International Committee of the Red Cross to promote compliance with the Geneva Conventions and promote humanitarian assistance and response where needed. She’s worked across the aisle. She was born and schooled in VT. After graduating Vermont Law School, she clerked for the Honorable Peter Hall here in Rutland. She also served Vermont as Assistant Attorney General. Her work continues to support our state. She reminded us that her office is available to help us.

Molly introduced Spencer Dole, as her Field Director. Will thanked Spencer Dole for all the help he’s done for Vermont Democrats.

Old Business:

Anna noted the receipt of a request from David Searles to approve his Proposed Statement of Concern Regarding Apparent Americans with Disabilities Act Discrimination in Vermont Statutes Regarding Adult Guardianship. David sent this document and a document on Vermont’s Two Court System to the committee for review 3 days prior to the meeting. David previously brought a request to the Rutland

County Democrat's October 2021 committee meeting. David was not in attendance during the current meeting.

At Carol Wright's request, the committee reviewed its actions from the October meeting regarding David's prior request about this issue. At Will's request, Anna read David's email with his current request.

Will said that he has been communicating with David regarding this issue since the start of the session and is aware that David has also emailed the head of the Vermont Democratic Party. David has knowledge-expertise on this issue based on his personal experience. A bill (S133) was introduced by Sen. Hooker and discussed in the Senate Judiciary Committee. That committee decided not to move forward.

Cheryl discussed the Senate Judiciary Committee's actions. David testified before the committee. The committee also received council from several stakeholders indicating that they preferred to take an alternative path forward. Cheryl is disappointed that she couldn't help. She is encouraging David to contact advocacy agencies, including the Vermont branch of the American Civil Liberties Union. At the court level, he can connect with several committees, including the Family Court Oversight Committee. David also wanted a particular record to be purged. If that doesn't move forward, having the record sealed may help.

It was noted that the VT Democratic Committee declined to vote on the Rutland County Democrat's request that they consider David's October 2021 request.

Anna asked if there was a motion to consider David's current request. No motion was made.

Other:

Barbara Pulling – How actively do we recruit candidates? Kathy Hall discussed her past efforts, including lots of phone calls and help from Cheryl. We should start a committee. Kathy has lists to help. If Anna and Noah want to convene a committee, we could do it. Spencer Dole also helped in the past.

The State Dems are interviewing a potential new person for Spencer's prior position. Spencer is currently a VDP employee with his other duties. The Speaker and Peter Welch are able to make calls to ask people to run, if they are interested. Cheryl asked us to let her know if we have ideas on people to run for House or Senate.

Redistricting will be a lot of work. We need to get buy in from people to use the mail-in ballots to help avoid any confusion.

Adjourned at 8:20.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Wright

Recording Secretary