

Rutland County Democrats Executive Committee Meeting

Monday, February 13, 2023, 6:45 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Zoom

Present: Mary Mellow, Anna Tadio, Scott Garren, Carol Wright, Eugenia Cooke, Diane Alberts, Barbara Noyes-Pulling, Josh Ferguson, Anna Tadio

Quorum Count: all present, quorum met

Secretary's Report: The minutes from the December meeting of the Ex. Committee were sent out in advance of the meeting. There were no minutes taken (or approved) during our short Ex. Com. meeting after the general meeting in January. Motion to accept Dec. minutes made by Diane, seconded by Barbara. Minutes accepted.

Treasurer's Report: Scott reported that we received \$143 from the VDP. Our current balance is \$3,514.21.

Old Business:

David Searles Request – Mary discussed a request from David regarding his concerns about the two-court system of adult guardianship in Vermont. Discussion of the committee's previous actions on this issue, previous actions of the State Legislature, and prior advice from the VDP. While sympathetic to David's concerns, we will continue to focus on our purpose of electing Democrats to seats in Rutland Co., as per the VDP.

News from Subcommittees:

Fundraising – Discussion of possible events for this year including fall potluck, spring brunch, evening with speakers and refreshments. Concerns about the time commitment to set up a large event. Maybe something simpler, such as an ice cream social with music and speakers. Simpler events are more social and are limited in fundraising. The letter is our biggest fundraiser.

Fundraising letter needs to be revised. The last several years we only sent it to previous donors. Saved on postage, but losing donors. When we sent more, we raised more funds. We have approx. 1,000 on our contact list. We could use a mail service to save postage. We could do the letter and smaller events, with the possibility that extra letters will make up the difference. Recently we mailed fewer letters, but also emailed letters with a donation link to our contacts. We had many Act Blue donations in previous years; less in 2022. Act Blue charges a fee. Anna suggests including an option for people to write checks.

Mary asked if Eugenia could get more info on the amount of funds raised from letters, email, etc. Mary discussed make phone calls to larger donors, along with sending letters. Dismas House sends a letter and uses phone banking (lets people know in advance).

Publicity – no discussion

Social Outreach – Barbara, Scott, and Diane have been working on outreach. Barbara had a meeting with Group 6 regarding our website. Barbara discussed a presentation she received from their representative. He would like to do a follow-up 2/21 after 1:30. Barbara had a good experience working with Group 6 in the past. She discussed the many improvements they could make to our site. The total cost is 14,570. We would need to go to the meeting with a budget plan in mind. There would be a yearly maintenance fee of \$1,200. Discussion of cost/benefits of updated website. What are other VT county committees doing?

Mary suggested talking to Castleton U. or Community College tech people to see if they could help. Scott discussed the lack of traffic to our website if we don't do marketing/generate contact on social media sites.

Discussion of improvements we might make to website, deleting some tabs, adding town chairs so people could find them, or linking to VDP website directly. Diane will check other VT county committee websites and get back with us. Concerns about cost, do we want to line up other vendors/designers? Josh will email Barbara his website designer contact info. We will wait on the meeting on 2/21. Eugenia checked some counties; they all linked to the VDP and a Facebook page.

We will get a few more estimates, look at them together. Will defer the meeting with Group 6. Barbara will work with Josh, Diane will contact tech people at Castleton/CCV and check for other county websites.

Membership – being worked on by Barbara, Eugenia and Mary.

New Business:

VDP Election/VDP State Committee “Member” – Mary reported the Delegates are now called “Members”. The Chair is now a permanent member, there are 2 alternatives and 3 alternates. We need one more member. We can probably do this at the March meeting. Think of people who would be interested and active. Alternates may want to run for members. Will add to the agenda for March meeting.

Elect a Grassroots Representative – Jim Dandeneau is beefing up this position. It will be a big job. It involves knowing VAN and working with town committees. The VDP would train. The role would include working with the state subcommittee to identify people to grow town committees in preparation for reorg.

ByLaws Review and Rewrite, or use VDP's – The Bylaws were last done in 2019. Discussion of continuing with our own bylaws or using the VDP's. The grassroots liaison position should be revised. We will review current Bylaws and discuss next meeting. Diane will check for county bylaws when she looks for websites.

March Elections – Anna will send an email regarding helping with the citywide election. Rutland City needs volunteers for stuffing envelopes, yard signs, canvassing, phone bank, etc. Rutland Forward will have door hangers of candidates and updated info on their website.

Discussion of sending an email blast looking for local election volunteers in Rutland County. The contact information for town chairs could be included.

Other – Josh discussed a request he received as to whether the RCDC would put out a statement regarding the proposed changes in State University libraries. Discussion of other actions already being done. We will continue to focus on election of candidates.

Josh discussed town chairs being able to access their Facebook pages. Mary Droege should have the credentials to Castleton FB page so she can monitor it and have an active presence. Discussion. Suggestion that Mary find out who is allowed to post so that she can obtain access. Should this be addressed in our bylaws?

Announcements:

Town Meeting Day Elections, Tuesday, March 7

RCDC Ex. Com. Meeting, April 10, then June 12

RCDC General meeting March 13, May 8, and July 10

VDP meeting this Sat – Josh, Mary, Barbara (will vote and attend)

Josh – Could we send out encouragement/engagement letter to get people to run for office? Mary discussed her Emerge VT training. They could come down and run a course here to help people make up their minds. We need to start early. The training would be one afternoon. Anna would also be happy to work with the group. Will Notte and Cheryl would probably be willing to step up. Mary suggested that we start later this year or early next year. Josh reminded us of the ongoing Republican community engagement in Castleton and other towns. We need to be more proactive.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Wright

Recording Secretary