

Rutland County Democrats Committee Meeting

Monday, March 13, 2023, 6:30 p.m. – 7:55 p.m.

Zoom Meeting

Welcome – Chair Mary Mellow welcomed those present. Executive Committee members present: Mary Mellow, Carol Wright, Eugenia Cooke, Barbara Noyes-Pulling, Diane Alberts, Josh Ferguson, and Scott Garren.

Quorum Count – 7 Delegates present: Josh Ferguson, John McKenna, Eugenia Cooke, Mary Mellow, Carol Wright, Barbara Noyes-Pulling, Scott Garren requested to act as an Alt. Del. (no quorum; 9 required).

Secretary's Report – The draft minutes from the January 9, 2023 meeting of the Rutland County Democrats Committee were sent out in advance of the meeting. Diane was unable to open the file. Discussion of best way to format minutes. Carol will try another format with next draft minutes. Eugenia made a motion to accept minutes; seconded by Barbara. Minutes accepted.

Treasurer's Report – Scott reported very little change since last meeting. Deposited a check for \$143 from VDP covering contributions from Rutland Co. to the Demps Club. No expenses. Diane moved to accept the report; seconded by Barbara. Treasurer's report accepted.

New Business

State Representatives Legislative Updates –

Mary Howard – Bills are coming and going quickly. Mary is on the General Housing Committee. The Paid Family leave bill has passed out of committee. Hopefully it will get through the Gov's office. Housing is a major topic of discussion.

Discussion of bills going through crossover—deadline is next week. Mary described the process of bills passing through the legislature.

Mike Rice and Joe Andriano do monthly legislative reports by email. Mary M. offered to forward those reports to anyone who is interested. She will send them along so we can check them out. Possibility for the website.

Cheryl – Bill H-31 regarding using chemicals to control lake nuisances will be voted on. This concerns Lake Bomoseen. This would be the time to contact legislators. It looks like our three senators are in support. Josh will forward a letter which details more of the technical review process which may be helpful.

Election of VDP State Committee Alternate Delegate - Mary said we have an open position for the State Committee. She asked if anyone is interested or has someone to suggest. Those meetings are on a Zoom basis, every other month. There is a meeting this Sunday. The alternates vote when a delegate is not present. Josh and Diane are available for this Sunday's meeting.

VDP Offer of Zoom to County and Town Chairs – The VDP has offered Zoom to county and town committees. Discussion of benefits of maintaining our own account, including low cost of present connection and unlimited time.

Diane questioned how to help support our state university libraries due to recent cost cutting efforts such as decreasing staff and books. Are there any events planned? Josh discussed one event in Castleton. Cheryl suggested that contacting Mary Moran, who is on the board.

David Potter discussed the ongoing budget deficit of 5 million dollars. Nationwide, there are not enough students to support the state colleges. This has been building for years. Discussion of the cost of school buildings/programs and the lack of funding.

Old Business

Social Outreach Research – Mary will send out the results of research that Barbara and Diane did on social outreach. Barbara had our website evaluated by a designer, but it was very expensive for the work they suggested. The company found that we have at least 13 broken links, which need to be removed. We need a prominent donate button. They have also looked at the web designer Josh used and ideas from the VDP. Dianne looked at websites for other county committees—5 Democrat and 5 Republican. Windsor Co.'s site is modern and accessible. In the meantime, Heather will help with some updates from time to time. Barbara offered to work with Heather.

Discussion about using Stafford. Mary discussed visits/visitors to our website. Barbara will reach out to Heather. We need to check out the website and share comments with Barbara.

Mary Howard suggested her neighbor who is a graphic designer. Barbara knows her. Will follow-up.

Rutland Forward and City Elections Success – All candidates were elected. Congratulations to all.

Fund Raising Plans – We need to make some concrete plans. We traditionally would be doing a letter now. We also need to have a social event and do some other things. Discussion of letter and the possibility of including phone banking.

Mary suggests approaching our regular donors on a personal basis, a phone call, or a handwritten note. We only mailed the people who donated in the past. We need to expand our donor list. Discussion of having an event, such as breakfast or dinner and reaching out to Rutland Forward. Discussion of having a sign-up for activity volunteers. We need 3-5 people to run an event.

Discussion of past fundraisers. We could reach out to town chairs for help with a county-wide event. We could have speakers or a panel with dinner. Off election years work best. Tinmouth has worked well in the past. After Easter might work. We could send out a poll with 3 dates to the town chairs. John has a volunteer for phone banking, if needed. Josh will help with the fundraiser. He suggested possibly something to honor Rutland Co. public servants.

Announcements -

March 18, 9:00 a.m. Castleton Democrats Breakfast with Stephanie Jerome

Other –

Mary Howard discussed her work as Co-chair of the Working Vermonters Caucus. Gov. Scott wants to change retirees' health insurance to a Medicare Advantage plan. They have put together a letter to Gov. Scott and are planning a meeting with the commissioner.

John McKenna – During town meeting day, the town of Ira declined to support the Rutland Library as they have in the past. It was close. This is pushback from drag queen story hour. Discussion of how this affects the children who receive free books, as well as the LGBTQ community.

Future Meetings:

Sunday, March 19 – VDP State Committee via Zoom 9:00 – 11:00. VDP will send link.

May 8 is next meeting. Maybe consider meeting in person.

Meeting adjourned: 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Wright

Recording Secretary