

**Democratic Rural Conference of New York State  
Board of Directors Meeting, March 5, 2016, Syracuse, NY**

**Minutes**

Chair Stein called the meeting to order at 10:04 AM. Secretary Clark called the roll. Chair Stein, Mr. Clark, Ms. Dodds, Ms. Crane, Ms. Longhany, Mr. Young, Ms. Kirsch, Ms. Hunter, Ms. Melfi, Mr. Souza, Mr. Ackerman, Mr. Alquist and Mr. Bujanow were present. Mr. Hurley arrived at 10:08. Mr. Bellardini was absent given his recent illness. Mr. Tim Perfetti, Mr. Henry Steck and Ms. Joann Schaeffer, all From Cortland County, and Mr. Kenan Baldrige from Wayne County, were also present. Mr. Paolo Cremidis from Chemung County arrived at approximately 11:10AM.

**Secretary's Report**

Secretary Clark presented minutes from December 12, 2015. Mr. Bujanow suggested a modification to the sentence that read, *"Mr. Bujanow suggested reaching out to the NYS AFL-CIO."* He motioned that the line be changed to, *"Chair Stein suggested the idea of having a conference segment on the 'status of Labor Unions today' and Mr. Bellardini suggested reaching out to NYS AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento as a possible speaker. Mr. Bujanow offered to contact Mr. Cilento on behalf of the DRC and inquire as to his willingness and availability to speak at the DRC Conference."* On a second to Mr. Bujanow's motion by Mr. Young, the modification was approved by unanimous consent.

With no further questions regarding the minutes, Mr. Young motioned that they be approved. On Ms. Hunter's second to Mr. Young's motion, the minutes were approved by a vote of 13-1 with Secretary Clark voting in dissent.

**Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Alquist presented his report for approval. He motioned that the report be amended to include three additional debits; \$118.22 to Mr. Clark for postage reimbursements, \$35.65 for conference call fees and \$25.00 for a get well gift for Mr. Bellardini. On a second to Treasurer Alquist's motion by Ms. Hunter, the amendments were approved unanimously by acclamation. There was no further discussion on the Treasurer's Report. On a motion by Mr. Young and a second by Mr. Souza, the Treasurer's Report was approved unanimously by acclamation.

Chair Stein asked that the order of the agenda be modified as both scheduled presenters, Assemblywoman Lifton and Mr. Ian Phillips, were running late.

**Conference Committee**

Ms. Dodds handed out a tentative agenda. Chair Stein explained the agenda as it looked now based upon the availability of speakers and cautioned that it was subject to change. She stated that Senator Schumer would be unavailable for the conference as his daughter was being married that same weekend in California. Ms. Dodds expanded upon the Saturday agenda, stating that Board elections would be held at 9:00 and that there would not be time for questions and answers with the Congressional candidates as there were too many. She further stated that she needed someone to help coordinate

the session and Mr. Souza agreed to. Ms. Dodds then explained that she would need one DRC Board Member to be in each room with each Congressional district.

Chair Stein commented on the Presidential forum stating that Senator Sanders would be unable to attend but that he would send a surrogate. She stated that Ms. Erin Stevens and Mr. Basil Smikle were trying to arrange for Secretary Clinton to attend but that they did not have an update at this time. A discussion ensued over which order to host the lunch versus the forum. Ms. Kirsch asked if the Pipefitters had a preference and Chair Stein said that she would speak with Mr. Greg Lancette. Mr. Young asked about whether the menu included beef, to which Chair Stein responded that it did not.

### **Program Book Committee**

Mr. Bujanow is working on contacting labor unions including Mr. Cilento's office about advertisements and sponsorships for the book. He expects that Mr. Cilento may send ad solicitations to 250 Locals on the DRC's behalf. Mr. Souza is also working on gathering ads. Ms. Longhany stated that there have been eight county ads submitted to date. Colleagues in attendance from Cortland County stated that they would reach out to UUP directly.

Ms. Crane stated that she had sent out an email and was still awaiting responses. Chair Stein reminded the Board that they needed to resubmit brief bios. Ms. Melfi encouraged members to see her after the meeting as she had last years book with her if anyone would like to proof theirs at that time. For those that didn't, Ms. Longhany stated that she would send emails with what was published last year once she got home. Chair Stein stated that she would ask Mr. Dan McCoy to sponsor an ad on behalf of Albany County. Ms. Melfi led a discussion about union advertising and the content of the centerfold. At Chair Stein's request, Ms. Hunter led a brief discussion about press coverage at the conference and noted that News10Now had questions about the Senate forum.

Mr. Steck posed a question about conference sessions regarding budgeting to which Ms. Dodds replied that those sessions are typically held in odd years as there are no Congressional or Senate forums. Ms. Hunter and Ms. Schaeffer discussed Young Dem involvement. The registration fee for Young Dems was set at \$60 for the entire conference this year. Mr. Schell inquired about reserving two tables for original DRC Founders and Board Members. Chair Stein obliged the request and suggested that each speaker should be introduced individually as the speaking order often changes. The Board agreed. Ms. Kirsch asked about reserving a meeting room for the Board on Friday. Ms. Dodds responded that a room had been reserved and that hotel staff would be available starting at 9:00.

### **Nominating Committee**

Chair Stein explained that Mr. Schell is unable to attend the meeting as he is out of state but that anyone wishing to run for a Board position will need to contact him directly by email with a written intention to do so. There was a brief discussion about Chair Stein being able to log into the Neon system. Mr. Clark indicated that all issues regarding her logging in have been resolved.

### **Political and Communications Committees**

Mr. Alquist will contact the appropriate officials important to the matter of early voting again and reiterate the DRC position.

Ms. Hunter explained that she has been updating the county committee links on the web site with the help of Mr. Clark and Ms. Dodds. She further explained that she will be conducting a controlled experiment involving the DRC Facebook page between now and the conference involving new content. She plans to assess the impact based on comments made on the conference questionnaire form. She also stated that she will not post matters concerning the Democratic side of the Presidential election.

### **Issues Committee**

Mr. Hurley explained that he had been in communication with Comptroller DiNapoli's staff regarding IDA reform. He then led a discussion about new issues that were of pressing concern for rural counties including water quality in rural areas and the possibility of contamination by salt storage, hydro-fracking, gas storage, etc. Several Board members cited examples of regional issues and Mr. Hurley replied that the Governor is looking into the possibilities of statewide filtration systems to abate the problem. The discussion grew to include asbestos remediation and former DEC regulated dumpsites. Mr. Young discussed that as many as 90% of houses in rural areas are still served by lead water service entrances. Ms. Schaeffer discussed drinking fountains in schools and college campuses and noted that there is new guidance suggesting that they be flushed regularly for thirty-minute cycles.

Chair Stein indicated that she had spoken with Mr. Richard Brodsky, former Assemblyman and IDA reform activist, about presenting some of his findings on IDA's to the DRC Board. He stated that he would if it were done in Putnam County. There was general agreement from the Board to meet in Putnam County in order to speak with Mr. Brodsky and Chair Stein suggested that the meeting should take place in the spring or early summer while waiting to hold a meeting in the North Country in the fall. The Board agreed to meet on June 11 with June 4 as a back up date depending upon Mr. Brodsky's schedule. Chair Stein explained that Assemblywoman Lifton would be arriving at 1:00PM.

### **Young Democrat Involvement and Neon System Update**

Mr. Clark explained that Mr. Paolo Cremidis has agreed to serve as the new Chair of the DRC Young Dem Advisory Board. Mr. Cremidis is originally from Chemung County and resides in Brooklyn but maintains strong constant interaction with all of the rural Young Dem chapters. Mr. Clark then provided updates on the Neon system including information on the conference registration process. Ms. Dodds suggested that online registration be deactivated on April 8 and that registration when paying by check be deactivated on April 1.

### **Old Business**

There was a brief discussion about member participation on committees. Mr. Cremidis arrived. Mr. Clark introduced him and he spoke briefly. At 11:39AM, Chair Stein recessed the meeting for lunch.

At 1:03PM, Chair Stein reconvened the meeting and introduced Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton. Assemblywoman Lifton spoke extensively about state assistance to education. She noted that while \$1.6B in state funding had been added back to the budget last year that there was still a \$4.8B deficit in where funding is supposed to be. She noted that the Assembly had requested that \$2.4B be added to the budget in 2016 and that the GEA be eliminated. She noted that the Governor had called for an additional \$1B to be added in his budget proposal. The Assemblywoman also spoke about how there had been forty percent cuts in the SUNY budget since 2009. She noted that SUNY will require another tuition increase but that the Assembly will likely vote it down.

Ms. Schaeffer thanked Assemblywoman Lifton for her longstanding commitment to education. She provided the Board with copies of the UUP Legislative Agenda and informed those in attendance that SUNY was now 34% funded by the state where it had been funded at 65% recently and 90% and 100% in the not very distant past. Mr. Souza asked how State Aid to education would be allocated and whether consolidation has worked to which the Assemblywoman responded that GEA may go away all together and that most consolidation has been in the form of administration. There are now about 700 school districts in the state where there were almost 1000 so many schools are taking advantage of resources to consolidate. Mr. Bujanow asked about the status of Charter Schools to which the Assemblywoman responded that while she was not a fan of charter schools, the Governor had proposed direct per person aid to charter schools. Mr. Hurley asked what the Senate position on aid to education was and Assemblywoman Lifton noted that she did not know yet as the Senate response was due later that week. Mr. Steck asked the Assemblywoman about the likelihood of a Constitutional Convention. She explained that the climate was likely not right at the present, in part because of the amount of dark money that is associated with a convention of that sort in New York State. Mr. Cremidis asked if young people were leaving the state due to education. The Assemblywoman replied that there was very little data available on the topic but that students who attend SUNY are up to 80% likely to remain in the state post graduation. Mr. Clark announced that DRC brochures were available in the box in the back of the room and encouraged Board Members and other colleagues in attendance to distribute them in their counties.

### **Adjournment**

On a motion by Mr. Young and a second by Mr. Bujanow, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:55PM.

By:

Date:

Jason A. Clark,  
Secretary