

Democratic Rural Conference

Minutes from a Meeting of the DRC Board of Directors

Held via ZOOM on November 13, 2021, at 10:00 AM

Meeting of the board called to order by Ms. Hunter at 10:04 AM

Board members in attendance

Judith Hunter	Bill Thickstun	Michael Plitt
Jeanne Crane	Ron McDougall	John Hurley
Keith Batman	Dan Farfaglia	Daniel Sniezek
Margaret Bartley	Max Della Pia	Michael Monescalchi
Frank Puglisi	Tim Perfetti	Tom Schimmerling
Cindy Appleton	Bill Hughes	

Board members absent

Ted Young	Darlene Baker
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Approval of Minutes

Mr. Hurley presented minutes from the September 25, 2021 Board of Directors Meeting.

Ms. Appleton moved approval of the minutes. Mr. Della Pia seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer Report

Mr. Puglisi reported the following:

DRC Operating Account

\$19,535.33 Bank balance at 11/12/2021

\$ 9,393.89 Funds encumbered from 2020 conference fees

\$10,141.44 Unencumbered balance at 11/12/2021

Federal PAC

\$956.00 Balance at 11/12/2021

Mr. Thickstun moved approval of the Treasurers report. Motion seconded by Mr. Della Pia. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Puglisi noted that the board needed to set the dues level for 2022.

A brief discussion followed.

Mr. Della Pia made a motion to set the dues for Regular DRC member to \$90.00 per county. Dues for Associate members would be set at \$10.00.

The motion was seconded by Mt. Thickstun.

The motion passed unanimously.

Report from the Chair

Ms. Hunter described the purpose of the Straw Poll Task Force and the changes necessary due to the new political calendar.

She asked Mr. Jones to lead the discussion and provide an update of the work of the Task Force to date.

Prior to his presentation, Mr. Jones asked Mike Schell to give a very brief history of the DRC Straw Poll, first held in 1998.

Mr. Jones started his presentation by noting that operative word for what he will present is TENTATIVE.

Mr. Jones reported:

The Straw Poll is scheduled for 02/05/2022 at 10:00 am at Ramada in Liverpool, NY

The process determined at this point:

Judith Hunter will send an invitation to participate in the straw poll to viable candidates.

The invitation will include a questionnaire meant to record views of candidates on issues of importance to rural voters.

The questionnaire must be returned by 01/05/2022.

The members of the DRC Board will review each of the questionnaires that are returned. Each candidate will then be given a rating. The rating scale is yet to be finalized.

Responses to the questionnaire and the rating will be posted on the DRC website.

The next step in the process is conducting virtual interviews with each of the candidates. The virtual interviews are tentatively 01/08/2022 and /or 01/13/2022.

Candidates will be strongly encouraged to participate in person on the day of the Straw Poll.

DRC members have the option of attending in person or viewing remotely. Only full DRC members are allowed to vote.

All voting, whether participating in-person or remotely will be done virtually using Election Buddy software.

Ballots will include candidates at 02/01/2021 with room for write-in

The discussion moved to details about space requirements and other items related to the hotel.

We need to determine the requirements for live streaming capability is critically important to the success of the straw poll.

Ms. Hunter share a document from the hotel that included tentative cost.

The very tentative rough cost is \$3,000 with offset for room rentals and meals. She noted that the more people we have physically at the event the lower our cost.

Ms. Dodds shared that the hotel room rate is 119.00.

Ms. Hunter said that we will need to work out criteria for assessing a registration fee to offset event costs.

Mr. Jones discussed issues related to the balloting process.

Because all voting will be done online, we need to have as accurate a database of voting members emails.

A major balloting problem will be email ballots going to peoples SPAM folders. Mr. Jones said that we will need to send more test ballots so that members become familiar with what to expect on the day of the straw poll.

Mr. Hughes said that we need to know who did not get the test ballots. He suggested that the Regional Vice-Chairs be tasked with contacting County Chairs to verify that all of their voting members received a test ballot.

The board decided that proxies would not be necessary because all members have the ability to view the candidates and vote on-line.

Mr. Schell shared that he had spoken about the straw poll with Morgan Hook, a PR Executive with the firm SKD. He reported that they have folks who would like to be helpful. It seems that after the Virginia election results the press is really interested in anything rural.

Ms. Hunter said SKD raised the idea of securing a co-sponsor for the straw poll. A possibility is Newhouse School at Syracuse.

Ms. Hunter circled back to the discussion of a registration fee.

Ms. Dodds suggested \$30.00 for each member who attends in person.

Mr. Jones suggested that we consider asking for donations from folks attending remotely.

Ms. Crane moved that the in-person registration fee be set at \$30.00 per person. Mr. Della Pia seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Della Pia moved that the board accept the report and recommendations of the Straw Poll Task Force. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hughes.

The motion passed unanimously.

Wrapping up the discussion, Ms. Hunter reminded the board that help will be needed from everyone on the board to make the event successful.

New business

Ms. Hunter initiated an Election post mortem discussion.

Ms. Hunter pointed out the results were pretty grim both nationally and throughout New York. She was very disheartened with some of the silo mentality she saw.

(At this point the Secretary noted that the names of members who offer comment will not be recorded – just the comments.)

We should have anticipated the GOP plan to defeat the voting propositions.

We did not deserve to win them – we did not do the work.

Propositions were too complicated.

Need to learn to get out front on these issues. Need to be more pro-active

Albany does not help rural counties with messaging about the legislation they pass - SAFE Act, Bail Reform, propositions

Need to be careful with our public message – can't point fingers and cast blame

Cultural caricature of Democrats as evil threats to the American way of life seemed to take hold

We need to engage in Deep Canvassing – speak with voters at time other than elections. Ask questions and listen to the responses. How can the DRC help counties with deep canvassing efforts.

Share the deep canvassing data with candidates to help them formulate their platforms

Can't beat ourselves up over NYS results when the whole country had similar results.

Next Meeting: Saturday December 18, 2021 at 10:00 am via Zoom

Motion to adjourn made by R. Della Pia at 12:10 pm. Mr. Hughes seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

John F. Hurley

DRC Secretary