

Democratic Rural Conference
Minutes from a Meeting of the DRC Board of Directors
Held via ZOOM on December 18, 2021, at 10:00 AM

Meeting of the board called to order by Ms. Hunter at 10:03 AM

Board members in attendance

Judith Hunter	Bill Thickstun	Michael Plitt
Jeanne Crane	Ron McDougall	John Hurley
Keith Batman	Dan Farfaglia	Darlene Baker
Margaret Bartley	Michael Monescalchi	Ted Young
Frank Puglisi	Tim Perfetti	Tom Schimmerling
Bill Hughes		

Board members absent

Cindy Appleton	Max Della Pia	Daniel Sniezek
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Approval of Minutes

Mr. Hurley presented minutes from the November 13, 2021 Board of Directors Meeting.

Mr Hughes moved approval of the minutes. Mr. Thickstun seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer Report

Mr. Puglisi reported the following:

DRC Operating Account

\$19,433.44 Bank balance at 12/17/2021

\$ 9,393.89 Funds encumbered from 2020 conference fees

\$10,039.55 Unencumbered balance at 12/17/2021

Federal PAC

\$956.00 Balance at 12/17/2021

Mr. Batman moved approval of the Treasurers report. Motion seconded by Ms. Crane The motion passed unanimously.

Report from the Chair

Straw Poll report – a recap of the events of last 10 days

The DRC had just signed the hotel contract and the press release and other materials were ready to go out when AG James withdrew from the Governor's race – turned everything upside down.

Since James withdrew all AG candidates have ended their campaigns. Remaining candidates for Governor may be reluctant to attend a straw poll held upstate (on Hochul home turf).

Ms. Hunter expressed thanks to Ms. Dodds for the arrangement she was able to make with the hotel if we were to cancel the February 5 straw poll event.

Ms. Dodds explained that per the terms of the contract, if we booked 60 rooms for Friday night and ordered 125 box lunches for Saturday we could significantly reduce our cost.

The hotel estimated gross revenue of \$12,000 for the event. Per the cancellation clause of the contract the DRC is responsible for 75% (\$9,000) of that amount if we cancel within 90 days of the event.

Ms. Dodds proposed to the hotel that the DRC would use the hotel for our 2023 conference in exchange for canceling the February 5, 2022 event. The hotel agreed but requires a deposit of \$6,000 due in January 2022.

Ms. Baker moved to cancel the February 5, 2022 straw poll event and agree to use the hotel for the 2023 DRC Conference. Mr. Hughes second the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Ms. Hunter expressed thanks to Mr. Jones for all of the work he did to prepare for the Straw Poll event.

Ms. Bartley said that we need to be sure that the knowledge gained about the virtual voting will be used in the future. Ms. Hunter noted that the voting at the 2022 conference will be done virtually.

Ms. Hunter requested committee reports.

By-laws Committee – Ms. Baker

The By-laws committee was very busy earlier this year with two major changes approved and have not had an opportunity to meet recently.

Issues Committee – Mr. Batman

The Issues Committee has not formally met recently.

Communications Committee – Mr. Thickstun

Mr. Thickstun thanked Regional Vice Chair Mr. Monescalchi for reaching out to the County Chairs in his region. He reported back several changes. Mr. Thickstun encourage each Regional Vice Chair to contact their County Chairs in early January to verify state committee members.

He stressed how important it was to know when changes happen at the local level.

Mr. Thickstun indicated that he would try to get a Newsletter ready for distribution after the first of the year and asked committee chairs and other to submit content.

Political Committee – Mr. Perfetti

Mr. Perfetti proposed setting either January 10 or January 24 as our virtual Lobby Day with the legislature.

He suggested topics for discussion for lobby day and asked for additional ideas.

- Election reform
- Food security
- Equity related to marijuana reform

Ms. Hunter noted that if the legislature is going to take action on election reform it is likely to happen very early in the session.

She noted that there are issues related to reforms required at boards of election across the state. One proposal is to create non-partisan election administration. Civil Service etc.

Ms. Hunter noted that in reality that means that in most rural counties Democrats will be shut out of election administration because Republicans control Civil Service appointments in most rural counties.

She said that we need to watch this closely and be ready to act quickly.

Ms. Bartley reported that gender equity language has bills in both houses. Need co-sponsors in the Senate. Mr. Perfetti was confident that we will be able to find rural Democratic legislators to sign on.

Mr. Plitt suggested that it may be in the best interest of GOP to delay finalizing district lines to protect incumbents. They may actively delay the process of releasing new maps to secure an advantage.

Mr. Hughes recommended that the DRC advocate for a fair process when the map are drawn. Some maps have Columbia County spit among 5-7 different districts which is very unfair. He stressed that the legislature needs to hear from the DRC since most of the map drawing will involve DRC counties.

Conference Report – Ms. Dodds

The DRC Conference is scheduled for the last weekend in April in Albany in-person

She suggested that we can still do a straw poll.

Mr. Hurley recommended that we move forward with candidate questionnaire and interviews prior to the state convention. The Straw Poll Task Force will take that up when meeting the first week in January.

Ms. Hunter reminded the board member that while Ms. Dodds has lots of experience organizing the conference much help will be needed from board members. Importantly we need to stress to all of our members the importance of attending.

The conference will be an important opportunity to hear from candidates who will be running in new districts.

Ms. Hunter asked for volunteers for the Program Committee: In addition to Ms. Hunter and Ms. Dodds, Ms. Baker, Mr. Perfetti and Mr. Hurley agreed to serve.

Mr. Hurley said that he and Mr. Puglisi would meet soon to discuss issues related to Conference Registration.

Ms. Hunter reminded the board that this is the first year with dues being paid by the county instead of individuals.

Messaging Task Force – Ms. Ottenweller

Ms. Ott reported that the Messaging Task Force has met recently and discussed the reality that the Biden infrastructure bills were getting beat up by GOP.

She recommended that Democratic committees in each county/town need to find out how much money their county is getting in infrastructure funding and make sure folks in their communities know that Democrats were responsible for this funding of important local projects.

Anytime there is a ground-breaking for a project funded by the infrastructure bill we need to make sure that media knows that the funding came thanks to Democrats in Washington and Albany.

Ms. Ash described the Allegheny Matters 501c3. They focus on non-partisan civic engagement and education. The goal is to bring more people into the political process.

New Business:

Ms. Hunter, on behalf of Ms. Appleton requested that the DRC formally support the prohibition of using highly salted fracking water on NY highways. This is Senate bill S355. Ms. Ash noted that currently municipalities need to get a beneficial use designation for use of the waste water.

Mr. Batman reported that Cayuga County already prohibits use of fracking water to treat roads in winter months. A discussion about the use of hydrofracking waste water vs brine followed.

Mr. Perfetti move that the DRC support the prohibition of using highly salted fracking water on NY highways. Mr. Schimmerling seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: Saturday January 15, 2022 at 10:00 am via Zoom

Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Young at 11:33 pm. Mr. Hughes seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

John F. Hurley

DRC Secretary