

Sudbury Democratic Town Committee (SDTC)
Minutes of the meeting of 18 November 2009

Chairperson Beverly Guild convened the meeting at 7:15 pm in the First Parish of Sudbury. Ten members attended and four guests: Nancy Ryan who is the past-president of the Massachusetts Civil Liberties Union (ACLUM), Massachusetts Democratic Committee member Susan Kennedy, and Bob Savoy and Yong Li, both of Sudbury. Ms. Ryan was the invited speaker for the meeting. The attendance list is attached to these minutes in the permanent record.

Minutes: Minutes of our meeting of 13 October, which had been vetted by email and distributed at this evening's meeting, were approved.

Finances: The Treasurer reported through the Chair that the current balance is \$670, not including money contributed for support of the campaign letter for Senate candidate, Rep. Mike Capuano. Jane Moeller said that she intended to take over as Treasurer from Helga Andrews in due course, probably early next year. For now she is assisting Helga and learning the duties.

Comments by Nancy Ryan: After the terrorist attacks on 11 Sept. 2001 and establishment of the Dept. of Homeland Security, the federal government invested heavily in building a nationwide intelligence network, a part of which engaged state and local police through "Fusion Centers" and related organizations. Through generally secretive agreements and contracts, state and local authorities could acquire money, equipment and software to undertake mass surveillance on persons and organizations and to share this information with federal and other authorities. Then-Governor Mitt Romney established the Commonwealth Fusion Center, the first such agency in the nation, and later the Boston Police Department established the Boston Regional Intelligence Center (BRIC). Boston also piloted the FBI's program of "Suspicious Activity Reporting", which has the potential and perhaps actuality of putting innocent people taking photos at risk of being entered into a law-enforcement database. These federally sanctioned and funded activities, conceived with the purpose of preventing terrorism, go far beyond the bounds of ordinary criminal investigations and operate currently in Massachusetts secretly and without supervision or oversight.

The ACLU believes that the present situation is dangerous to Bill of Rights protections and that mass surveillance in Massachusetts must be placed under strict supervision by an independent commissioner and commission. To this end, ACLU supports and hopes the SDTC will also support Mass. Senate Bill 931, An Act regarding the Commonwealth Fusion Center and other intelligence data centers, presented by Sen. Harriette Chandler and co-sponsored by our two senators. A similar bill needs also to be introduced into the House. ACLU hopes that it can gain the support and cooperation of the SDTC in this important legislation.

In the question period following Ms. Ryan's remarks, Hollocher wondered whether the Sudbury police might be engaged in federally supported surveillance. She responded that she did not know, but that it would be interesting but perhaps not easy to find out.

Comments by Susan Kennedy: Susan reported that Mass. Senator Jamie Eldridge is still in recuperation after his recent accident and surgery and that he has now a limited work schedule.

Memorial in behalf of George McQueen: The meeting again indicated support to award a one-time scholarship or gift to an appropriate and deserving senior graduating from Lincoln-Sudbury High School in 2010, and Beverly Guild suggested an amount of \$500, for which there was general agreement. Susan Kennedy suggested that we solicit contributions for the memorial award from Democratic Party donors. Questions remain, however, about how the gift recipient would be chosen, according to what criteria, and by whom. Would the SDTC have any say in the selection of the recipient? These questions were considered moot in the context of the present meeting and await further information. It was moved and unanimously agreed to defer further discussion of the award until the January 2010 meeting.

Dates for future meetings: The Chair suggested the following meeting dates and the meeting concurred. January 14, February 16, March 18, and April 21.

Democratic caucus in Sudbury: It was moved and unanimously agreed to schedule the 2010 caucus for Saturday February 13. The Chair volunteered to attempt to reserve the Senior Center for the caucus.

Sign storage in the church carriage shed: Henry Noer reported that the First Parish will continue to allow the SDTC to store political signs in the carriage shed, at least for a reasonably limited number of signs and with the need to avoid clutter.

General discussion: John Riordan expressed his disappointment over the decision of the Massachusetts legislature to adjourn for some seven weeks in the face of much unfinished business and contrary to the wishes

of Governor Patrick. He felt that such a long adjournment under the circumstances reflected poorly on the leadership and could only damage the reputation of the Democratic Party and reinforce public cynicism for the legislative process.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 pm.

The dates for the next four meetings are January 14, February 16, March 18, and April 21, 2010, at 7:15 pm in the First Parish.

Announcements

The SDTC has acquired a postal mailbox: Mailbox 252, Sudbury MA 01776.

If you have not already done so, please forward your 2009 contribution of \$35 minimum, c/o SDTC, to Helga Andrews, Treasurer, 11 Maple Ave., Sudbury. Contributions for 2010 are expected during January.

Thomas Hollocher, Secretary, 20 November 2009.