

Minutes of the Sudbury Democratic Town Committee Meeting, January 13, 2021

The January 13, 2021 meeting of the Sudbury Democratic Town Committee was called to order by Chair Tania Vitvitsky at 7:05 pm on Zoom. Also attending were Carmine Gentile Vice-Chair, Sue Rushfirth Treasurer, Nuha Muntasser Outreach Coordinator, Peg Espinola Secretary, and members Jeanne Maloney, Carl Offner, Andrew Bettinelli, Henry Noer, Marilyn Riepe, Frank Riepe, Eva Fridman, Nathaniel Fridman, Lisa Kouchadjkian, Gary Bean, Linda Hench-Gentile, Jennifer Roberts, Ann Barysh, Henry Noer, John Riordan, Christina Riordan, and Hank Sorrett. Present as visitors were Christopher Lorant and Janie Dretler.

The minutes of the December 2020 meeting were accepted unanimously.

Treasurer's report: Currently, there is \$729.49 in our account. A check for \$200 has been returned from the Sarah Gideon Campaign but not yet credited to our account. Ten people have not paid dues for 2021. Sue Rushfirth will send out reminder letters shortly. (Sue commented that some of these people may have thought they were paying dues for the current year as opposed to dues owed for 2020. The dues are \$50.) The Treasurer's report was accepted unanimously.

Correspondence: There was none, other than that regarding the problem of the campaign donation that could not be accepted.

Impeachment: Henry Noer suggested we send a letter regarding the necessity of impeaching President Trump to our Congressional representatives, Katherine Clark and Lori Trahan, with a cc. to senators Warren and Markey. Carl so moved, Carmine seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously. Tania has already drafted such a letter but needs an address and contact person for Senator Markey. Carmine will provide it.

State legislative report by our representative, Carmine Gentile:

Healthcare for All (single payer bill): This bill will be refiled. The filing deadline has been moved to the third Friday in February from January. Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa and Sen. Jamie Eldridge are the primary sponsors. Carmine will be a cosponsor, again.

Four other big bills that were reported out of conference committees (consisting of three senators and three representatives) are as follows, with their statuses:

Police Reform: Governor Baker sent it back, unsigned. The Legislature and the Governor eventually came to an accord on a compromise bill, which the Legislature passed and the Governor signed.

Housing and Economic Development: The conference committee released the bill on January 5th and it was passed by both the House and Senate and sent to the Governor and signed by him. It included provisions for **Telehealth**. Telehealth had been allowed by order of the Governor during the emergency period initiated by the Governor because of the Pandemic. The bill coming out of conference made it permanent in some instances, as it has worked out very well, including for behavioral health.

Transportation: The conference committee agreed upon sixteen billion dollars for transportation, to be raised through bonds. This will fund infrastructure improvements throughout the state.

Climate: At the time of our meeting the Governor had not acted regarding the Legislature's climate bill, with its requirement for significant reductions in carbon emissions within the decade and beyond, nor had he vetoed it. If he were to veto it after the legislative session ended, or return it unsigned, the plan was to refile an identical bill and give the Governor another the opportunity to sign it, suggest amendments or veto it. The Legislature would then have time to respond appropriately.

Carmine mentioned that in all, **167 bills were acted upon**--mostly involving local issues--between noon on December 5 and 4:45 a.m. January 6. Later that morning the legislators were sworn in for the next session, a procedure that continued through the period of the riot in Washington. Carmine commented that it's been "interesting," and that the warning of possible violence at state houses is still in effect.

Gary Bean asked if it was true that Governor Baker had made **an equation between the Black Lives Matter demonstrations and the Capitol riot**, as reported by the State Democratic Committee chair Gus Bickford. Carmine said he would follow up on this.

In response to a question by Jeanne Maloney, Carmine brought us up to date on the status of the **dispensing of Covid 19 vaccines**. This included the establishment of a team to direct the program under Health and Human Services director Mary Lou Sudders, the current order of priorities for various categories of recipients, and the prospective use of Gillette Stadium and Fenway Park as a mass vaccination sites. He stated in response to a question that that the Defense Production Act **could** be used to increase production of the vaccine(s).

Jennifer Roberts, our Select Board member, reported on what is going on at the local level.

The new **Sudbury Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission (sudbury.ma.us/dei)** is taking applications. The Commission will include the Town Manager and the Chief of Police as well as a number of advisory members. Applications are due by February 16. In response to a query, Jen said that parents in the Metco program have been allocated a couple of slots. She was not sure about participation by members of the Metco staff.

The Board finally received legislative approval to **change its name from Board of Selectmen to the Select Board**, thanks in large measure to the work of Carmine Gentile as well as Janie Dretler of the Board. The Governor signed the bill.

The Board has received a report from the Division of Local Services, which is under the state Dept. of Revenue, with valuable input regarding how to maintain and improve infrastructure without relying on debt and debt exclusion for smaller projects. These should be included under taxation. **[Jen please review and revise...I didn't get all of this.]** Jen also updated us on the **progress of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail**. It is hoped that construction can start in FT 2022. The Permanent Building Committee is in the process of selecting a designer for the **Fairbank Community Center**. Lisa Kouchakdjian, who serves on the Commission on Disability, expressed the hope that someone from the Commission should be involved in these major projects.

Preparation is under way for the **2021 Annual Town Meeting**. The budget cycle has begun with input from the FinCom and cost centers. January 29 is the deadline for warrant articles to be submitted. It is likely that Town Meeting will be outside as it was in 2020, sometime in May.

Ann Barysh informed us of a collaboration between the Sudbury Community for Racial and Social Justice and the Lincoln METCO Coordinating Committee to screen a documentary entitled "I'm Not a Racist...Am I?" at multiple times between Saturday, Feb. 27 at 9 am and Monday, March 1 at noon, followed by a community panel conversation on Wednesday, March 3 at 6:30 pm and "professionally facilitated small group discussions" on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Other groups, including the Anti-Racist Committee at Congregation Beth El, have been involved in the planning. This initiative grew out of a growing awareness that students of color at LSRHS felt unsafe, and were unhappy about their lack of a feeling of connection to the school. Ann will be a trainer during this process and is hopeful that many of us will watch it, possibly together, in some fashion. She says it is "powerful, direct and thought-provoking." She will post the information on the list-serve.

We discussed the **National Day of Service project** proposed for Monday, January 18 by the Presidential Inaugural Committee. Jeanne Malone had suggested we consider collecting food for the Sudbury Food Pantry. Tania (who volunteers at the Pantry) had already discussed the offer with John Thomas of the Pantry who suggested we reach out to the Republican Town Committee to collaborate with us on this project. After a brief discussion it was decided not to go that route. Lisa Kouchakdjian offered her home as a place to stage the collection. Sue, Lisa, Peg and Carmine will work with Tania on the details of scheduling volunteers, obtaining and transporting "banana boxes," etc. Tania will disseminate the list of foods that are requested. We will share information about the project with local members of the Sudbury Protest Group.

We also discussed another suggested PIC event, the **COVID Memorial** which will take place on Tuesday evening, January 19. After a discussion it was decided that we would not take action as a group.

We discussed plans for a **"pre-Inaugural" celebration by the Sudbury Protest Group** scheduled for 10-11 am Wednesday morning Jan. 20. We will have a big Biden-Harris banner, American flags, a boom box playing music from the PIC playlist and other sources, helium balloons, and signs. All SDTC members are encouraged to attend.

New business: Sue informed us that the Domestic Violence Round Table has two programs planned for February, which is Teen Dating Awareness Month: **Relationships in the Age of Reality TV: Talking with Teens About**

Healthy Dating Relationships (Feb. 3 at 7pm) and **Lighting the Way: Teen Panel on Dating Abuse Prevention and Awareness** (Feb. 9 at 3pm) Registration is via their website, <https://www.domesticviolenceroundtable.org/>.

Hank Sorett asked who was running for town offices in the upcoming election on March 29. Lisa Kouchakdjian will be running for one of two seats on the Select Board, as will incumbents Janie Dretler and Dan Carty. Lisa was six years on the Sudbury School Committee and is currently a member of the Commission on Disability. Tania suggested that Janie and Lisa each present at our next meeting, in February. Both agreed to do so.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Peg Espinola, Secretary