

Minutes of the March 10, 2021 Meeting of the Sudbury Democratic Town Committee

The March 10, 2021 meeting of the Sudbury Democratic Town Committee was called to order on Zoom at 7:05 pm by Tania Vitvitsky, Chair. Also attending were Carmine Gentile, Vice-Chair; Sue Rushfirth, Treasurer; Nuha Muntasser, Outreach Coordinator; Peg Espinola, Secretary; and members Colin Warwick, Jeanne Malone, Linda Hench-Gentile, Lisa Kouchakdjian, Carl Offner, Henry Noer, Ann Barysh, Marilyn Unger-Riepe, Frank Riepe, Jennifer Roberts, Aruna Pundit, Tom Hollocher, Gary Bean, Eva Fridman, Hank Sorett and Andrew Bettinelli. Attending as guests were Kara LaTreize, Democratic State Committee member from Southborough; Sylvia Nersessian and Mandy Sim, candidates for the Sudbury K-8 School Committee; Frances Tarbone of Sudbury; and Christopher Lorant of Framingham.

The minutes of the February 10, 2021 were approved.

Treasurer's Report: There is \$881.87 in the account. All bills have been paid. Dues for 2021 have been paid for all but five members [number as corrected after the meeting]. The report was accepted by the committee.

Correspondence: Tania reported on a letter from a member of the Weston Democratic Town Committee praising our web page. Colin Warwick, who is our web designer and administrator, guided the writer to an easy-to-use DIY website design program.

Legislative Report by State Representative and SDTC Vice-Chair Carmine Gentile: Carmine reported that most bills have been filed for the coming two-year session. The climate roadmap bill has passed in both the House and Senate by supermajority votes and went to the governor for his signature. He returned it with several substantive amendments, which are unlikely to be accepted by the legislature. Some of his minor positive changes were incorporated into the new bill and will be voted on in the two chambers as early as tomorrow and returned again to the governor. Our state senator Mike Barrett was a "chief architect" of this legislation.

Committee assignments have been made. Carmine was appointed Vice Chair of the Joint Committee on Higher Education, as well as a member of the Joint Committees on Elder Affairs, State Administration and Regulatory Oversight, Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture. Just one of those committees has met so far, for a "meet and greet" among members and staff. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to influence the legislative perspective--"what changes do we need to make now?" to recover and come back strong is a question in the minds of many.

Report from Select Board member Jennifer Roberts: She reminded us that the town election is scheduled to take place on March 29. Any registered voter may request a mail-in ballot, but the request has to be made again, for this election, by March 23. Town meeting will be held outside on May 22 with a "wash-out" date of May 23. If both dates are washouts, or there is carry-over from May 23 (unlikely), the meeting will be rescheduled for mid-June. Some of the issues that are coming up are safety and ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) concerns about Feeley and Haskell fields, which have major water issues in the spring, as well as the need for improvements to the Post Road fire station, which is busier than ever.

The Sudbury Select Board met with Lincoln's three-person board earlier this week. Jennifer stated that "we need to dust off the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School agreement--but will wait to do so until fall." Lincoln and Sudbury are partners on other initiatives, including some involving the state legislature.

Jennifer has attended the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Task Force meetings, which are being televised and shown on Sudbury's cable channel. She described them as "exciting"--"we hope to stay on track for construction in 2022." The project is currently under consideration by the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Fairbank Center Update: The Permanent Building Committee selected Compass Project Management from among many candidates to oversee the design and construction of the community center. Compass is now in the process of interviewing potential designers.

The Select Board has interviewed eight of nine candidates so far for the new Sudbury Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission. The Commission has room for thirteen members, so there are openings for more

candidates. Jennifer describes the current group as "dynamic," but at this point, it is made up entirely of women. SDTC's Nuha Muntasser has expressed an intention to apply to the Commission.

Presentations by two candidates for Sudbury K-8 School Committee: Sylvia Nerssessian, incumbent and present chair of the committee, and Mandy Sim each made a presentation. (The third candidate for the two openings on the committee, Tyler Steffey, presented at our February meeting.)

Sylvia Nerssessian described her experience as a veteran member and current chair of the Sudbury School Committee and a member of various planning task forces in town, in addition to her experience on the board of trustees of an independent school. She referred us to sylvia4sudbury.org and to her Facebook page for further information, emphasizing her commitment to public service, her financial experience, and her concern that schools return to in-person learning as soon as possible. She answered questions on equity and diversity initiatives in the schools as well as on the issue of outside surveillance technology.

Mandy Sim is running for school committee for the second time. She has a background as a Hollywood producer and as the owner with her husband of Jam Time, a preschool enrichment program, which is now in four Greater Boston towns. She referred us to her website, mandysim.net, and to her Facebook page, MandySimSudbury. She cites her love of children and teaching, her experience in collaborative endeavors, her commitment to taxpayers as well as parents and children and, like Sylvia, her desire to see the schools reopen for in-person learning as soon as it is safe to do so.

Involvement of SDTC members on town committees and boards: We discussed the involvement of SDTC members in Sudbury town affairs. Currently several members of the committee are also members of town committees and boards, including Jen Roberts, John Riordan, Tania Vitvitsky, Carmine Gentile, Lisa Kouchakdjian, Frank Riepe and Gary Bean. Additionally Sue Rushfirth is President of the Regional Domestic Violence Roundtable, and Hank Sorett is on the board of the Friends of the Library. Committee members mentioned vacancies on the Council on Aging and the Disability Commission, and possibly on the Cultural Commission. We discussed whether there might be another way for people interested in further involvement with town government to easily access a list of openings on such town entities other than by clicking on each site individually. Jen said she would take our feedback to the Select Board, along with Frank Riepe's comment that the Permanent Building Committee has historically sought out design talent, which might be advantageous now as they move forward with the Fairbank Community Center project.

New Business: We discussed the work of the subcommittee tasked with "getting ready for 2022" in terms of political action. A number of suggestions were put forward with regard to fighting voter suppression, supporting Democratic candidates in various crucial races both within our state and nationally, encouraging voter registration and media accountability, and more. We discussed the pros and cons of removing the filibuster. Carl suggested that people send their ideas to the Sudbury Democrats' IOS list. Gary offered to draft a letter to our senators and representatives expressing our priorities for their leadership at this time. Hank Sorett updated us on what the lawyers' group he is involved with is looking into now involving new approaches to protecting civil liberties, in light of the suit brought against Governor Cuomo regarding freedom of religion and COVID restrictions. Jeanne Maloney reminded us that "we should each do what we feel comfortable doing."

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, April 14 at 7, on Zoom.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Peg Espinola, Secretary.