

2020 Annual Report, Sudbury Democratic Town Committee

Introduction and Overview:

The Sudbury Democratic Town Committee represents the Massachusetts Democratic Party in Sudbury. It is governed by its own bylaws in conjunction with the bylaws of the State Democratic Party of Massachusetts and the General Laws of the Commonwealth. Our purposes, according to our bylaws, are as follows: to foster and advance the ideals and aims of the Democratic Party; to work in cooperation with the Democratic National Committee and the State Committee; to aid in carrying out the planks of the platform of the State and National Conventions of the Party; to work and organize for the success of the Democratic candidates of the District, County, State and Nation; to do all things necessary and incidental to the building and strengthening of the Democratic Party of Massachusetts. What follows in this report is how we advanced those purposes during the calendar year 2020.

Members: Members are elected by ballot at Democratic Presidential primary elections. All Democratic Town Committees are allowed to have thirty-five members, in addition to those who are "life members," having served for twenty years or more (and are not required to be on the Primary ballot). Members must be registered Democrats and live in Sudbury. Between primaries vacant committee positions may be filled by the Committee. Candidates may be elected by the Committee as associate (non-voting) members after attending at least two previous meetings and as full (voting) members at a subsequent meeting. For a current membership list, see: <https://sudburydemocrats.org/about-us/>.

Officers: We have five elected officers. At the beginning of 2020, our officers were as follows: John Riordan, Chair; Carmine Gentile, Vice-Chair; Sue Rushfirth, Treasurer; Henry Noer, Secretary. At the April meeting Nuha Muntasser was elected Affirmative Action and Outreach Coordinator. At our meeting on July 29th, we did nominate and elect Tania Vitvitsky, Chair, and Peg Espinola, Secretary, and re-elected Carmine Gentile, Vice-Chair, and Sue Rushfirth, Treasurer.

Caucus: Our Caucus to elect representatives to the State Democratic Convention took place on March 3, at the Grange Hall, shortly before COVID lockdown. Six female Markey delegates were elected: Tania Vitvitsky, Lisa Kouchakdjian, Nuha Muntasser, Sue Rushfirth, Peg Espinola and Aruna Pundit. Male Markey delegates were Henry Noer, Gary Bean, Tom Hollocher, Frank Riepe and Colin Warwick. Alternatives were Linda Hench-Gentile, Eva Fridman, John Riordan, and Nathaniel Fridman. The Convention, scheduled for May, was ultimately cancelled due to the pandemic.



Caucus Guests: Congresswoman Katherine Clark and Senator Ed Markey as well as representatives from other Democratic campaigns.

Regular Meetings of the Committee: We met every month during 2020--slightly more often than during a regular year, when we sometimes take a summer break for a month. Our meetings were as follows: In-person meetings at the Sudbury Grange on January 9 and February 13; meetings by telephone conference on March 12 and April 4; all subsequent meetings via Zoom, including May 14, June 11, July 29, August 13, September 9, October 14, November 18, and December 2. On December 2, our official meeting was followed by our traditional holiday party, but instead of in-person festivities at a private home or Hosmer House, we improvised in the virtual format with music, games, and general frivolity. Our Zoom meetings were particularly well attended, with as many as eighteen people showing up, in addition to invited guests, and other members of the public who asked to attend.

Sadly, the town had to cancel the July 4th parade in 2020, in which we invariably participate along with many of our elected representatives.

At each of our meetings we received briefings from Carmine Gentile on the activities of the State Legislature, from which we learned a great deal about the intricacies involved in getting bills passed. At most meetings we also heard from SDTC member Jen Roberts, who is a member of the Sudbury Select Board, on the ongoing issues before the Board and the timetable for important Town events. This was especially useful as the pandemic played havoc with normally scheduled activities.

Several of us also serve on other Town boards and committees and bring information from those entities into our meeting.

Political Discussions: Discussions about issues of policy and strategy involving Massachusetts and federal elections take place both at our meetings and online, in our SudburyDems@groups.io forum. Topics discussed have been policy issues such as mass incarceration and police reform, ranked choice voting, and State House transparency. We discussed such strategic issues as how much emphasis, relatively, the committee should place on local, state, and national races, and how much support we should give to candidates who are Democrats but with whom we may disagree on many issues. Other topics discussed have been policy issues such as mass incarceration and police reform, ranked choice voting, and State House transparency.

Special Guests: The following guests presented at our meetings during 2020:

January: State Senator David Magnani (requesting support for Organizing Corps 2020); State Representative Ken Gordon (Democratic State Committee candidate); Liam Horsman (requesting support for the Ed Markey senatorial campaign); Paul Lauenstein (requesting support for the We the People Campaign to overturn Citizens United)

February: Charlie Russo (Select Board candidate); Lee Goodman (proposal to use inactive rail lines for bicycle paths and hybrid-electric bus lines); Mark Selig (Bloomberg for President)

March: Pat Brown (Select Board candidate)

June: Deb Oppenheimer (Sudbury Food Pantry's Race Amity Day Sudbury Food Drive)

July: Dhruba Sen of Framingham (requesting support for Black Lives Matter agenda)

August: Elaine Donnelly and Nora Rothschild, Wayland DTC (on behalf of the Carmine Gentile campaign); Jeffrey Levine (from the Council on Aging, on behalf of the proposed TM warrant article to fund the Fairbank Community Center)

October: Len Simon (asking for support for the CSX railway acquisition article at Town Meeting)

Campaign donations (funded by our dues, which were raised from \$35 to \$50 in January 2020):

We made the following campaign donations in 2020:

\$500 to the Campaign to re-elect Carmine Gentile to the State House of Representatives

\$400 to the Biden campaign

\$200 to Sarah Gideon in Maine (donation returned)

\$200 to Gary Peters in Michigan

\$200 to Jaime Harrison in South Carolina

\$200 to Mark Kelly in Arizona

\$200 to Jon Ossoff in Georgia.

In December we agreed to prepay our 2021 dues so that we could make the following additional contributions on behalf of the Democratic candidates in the Georgia runoff: \$250 each to Raphael Warnock, Jon Ossoff and Fair Fight.

Other financial outlays:

We paid \$216 to the US Postal Service for our PO box rental.

We paid \$100 rental to the Hosmer House for our 2019 Holiday Party.

General administrative costs were \$148.29.

Bank fees on 1/20 and 12/20 were \$15. They were suspended during much of the Pandemic.

We gave \$250 to Organizing Corps 2020, which was training young people throughout the country to become skilled organizers in the 2020 Democratic presidential election campaign and beyond. A separate fund-raising initiative organized by member Ann Barysh had to be scaled back due to the Pandemic but resulted in substantial additional individual donations to this organization from members and their friends.

We approved a measure to buy a table (ten tickets) at the 3rd MAD breakfast in May, for a total of \$450, to be at least partially reimbursed by those members who decide to go. However, the breakfast, an annual affair that funds Democratic campaign activities in the 3rd MAD Senate district, was cancelled due to COVID, and the check was returned.

We sent \$250 to the Massachusetts State Democratic Committee in May.

Official correspondence from the Committee: In May we sent a letter to Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo commending him for passing legislation allowing no-excuse absentee voting in local elections up through June 20, 2020 (including Sudbury's). The letter went on to request that these provisions be extended to the September and November elections, and that there be a number of other initiatives to make voting safer, easier, and more secure during this crucial (and unusual) election year, as well as in the future.

In November we wrote a letter to Senator Clark congratulating her on her election as Assistant Speaker of the House. A version of the letter also appeared in the local press.

Activities of the Committee and its members: Election-related activities

Campaign to re-elect Carmine Gentile to the State Legislature: The committee strongly supported the re-election campaign of our member and Vice-Chair Carmine Gentile to be our representative to the State Legislature. We worked in conjunction with Carmine and his campaign manager, fellow SDTC member, Linda Hench-Gentile, to write letters to the editor, send out postcards, and stand out with Carmine at the Town Center and the business district during the campaign, as well as at the polls on Election Day.

Biden-Harris campaign: We participated as individuals in campaign activities coordinated by the Democratic Committee-sponsored Metrowest for Biden as well as VoteForward, Swing Left of Greater Boston, Together for 2020, and the Acton and Concord Indivisible. These activities included phone banking, text banking, and sending letters and postcards to voters in swing states, some with attached applications for mail-in ballots.

Protect the Vote activities: Two of our members were involved in activities on Election Day to facilitate the voting process -- Tania Vitvitsky in Massachusetts, with Common Cause, and Ann Barysh in New Hampshire. Additionally, Hank Sorett was part of a team of lawyers who were mobilized to go anywhere in the nation where necessary to ensure that voting was fair and that the results were protected.

Other activities of the Committee: Town Meeting involvement: The Committee voted to support four warrant articles: The acquisition of the CSX right-of-way by the Town, the funding of the Fairbank Community Center, changing of zoning laws to allow for more family-friendly housing, and the expediting of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. Individually we took lawn signs and wrote letters to the editor in favor of these articles, and as a committee we invited workers in those campaigns to join us in downtown Sudbury for a grand visibility event on a Saturday in October. All the articles that we supported passed. One that we rejected, money for surveillance cameras in the schools, failed after an argument against it by member Hank Sorett.

Coordination with, and endorsement of, the Sudbury Protest Group: Since June of 2018, a group of people had been meeting at the Town Common on Fridays to protest various actions (and inactions) of the Trump administration, beginning with the separation of migrating children and parents at our Southern border. The protests took the form of standouts with signs, for an hour during rush hour. During the ensuing months other issues such as gun control, corruption, trans rights, climate change denial, and science denial as it pertained to the pandemic were added, along with continued concerns about the treatment of refugees and other immigrants. Though separate from the SDTC, and drawing participants from neighboring towns as well as Sudbury, many of its informal leaders were/are SDTC members. In August 2020, the Committee formally endorsed the Sudbury Protest Group. Pictures from SPG standouts were often posted to our Facebook page. A demonstration that month to "Save the Post Office" brought members from both groups together on a march down route 20. In December we planned a joint celebration of the election outcome with the SPG, to take place on the morning of the Inauguration, with music and American flags.

Black Lives Matter: Following the murder of George Floyd by a Minnesota policeman, the country, including Sudbury, became swept up in the Black Lives Matter movement. Members of the Committee as well as the Sudbury Protest Group participated in a large Black Lives Matter demonstration divided between athletic fields on Fairbank Road and the intersection of Rte. 27 and Concord Road, on June 2, 2020. At our July meeting we voted in support of the gist of the agenda and principles of the movement. A committee was appointed to craft a statement of support to go up on our new website, which came into being at about the same time. Eventually a half-dozen of our members worked on the draft, which was sufficiently close to completion by our October meeting that it could be voted on and unanimously endorsed by the members. SDTC Black Lives Matter statement: <https://sudburydemocrats.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/SDTC-Statement-re-Black-Lives-Matter-Dec.-2020.pdf>

Race Amity Day Food Drive: On June 14, Race Amity Day, we participated in a town-wide food drive by collecting food at the home of member Lisa Kouchakdjian for the Sudbury Food Pantry, with several members participating to keep things flowing smoothly in a safe and socially distanced fashion.

Conclusion: As 2020 came to a close we congratulated ourselves on having adapted to life as a committee during the COVID19 pandemic, continuing to meet monthly despite being unable to meet in person. We contributed both money and time to many successful campaigns at the local, state, and national level, and participated in important sociopolitical movements apart from campaigns. We educated ourselves constantly on the issues affecting our town, state, and nation, added new members, raised our dues, and created a new, modern website. All in all, we positioned ourselves to continue to play an important role in Democratic politics in this community and beyond.

Submitted by Peg Espinola, Secretary

Sudbury Democratic Town Committee
Website: <https://sudburydemocrats.org/>
Email: info@sudburydemocrats.org

Tatiana (Tania) Vitvitsky, Chair
Carmine Gentile, Vice-Chair
Margaret (Peg) Espinola, Secretary
Sue Rushfirth, Treasurer
Nuha E. Muntasser, Affirmative Action and
Outreach Coordinator