

Minutes of the July 14, 2021 Meeting of the Sudbury Democratic Town Committee

The July 14, 2021 meeting of the Sudbury Democratic Town Committee was called to order on Zoom by Chair Tania Vitvitsky at 7:05 pm. Also attending were Vice-Chair Carmine Gentile, Treasurer Sue Rushfirth, Outreach Coordinator Nuha Muntasser, Secretary Peg Espinola, and members Jeanne Maloney, Carl Offner, Lisa Kouchakdjian, Linda Hensch-Gentile, Hank Sorett, Jennifer Roberts, Henry Noer, Marilyn Unger-Riepe, and Eva Fridman. Attending as guests were Dhruva Sen of Framingham and State Committeewoman Kate Donoghue.

Correspondence: Tania reported receiving an email from Chris Dempsey, candidate for State Auditor, requesting that he be able to speak briefly at our caucus on July 25. Chris Lorant also requested time at the caucus as representative of the Disability Outreach Subcommittee of the Democratic State Committee. In both cases the requests were granted.

The minutes of the June 9, 2021 SDTC meeting were approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report for the year to date: Sue Rushfirth reported that we have \$827.27 in our account, after paying expenses, including bank fees, our annual post office box fee, and \$234.51 in expenses related to the caucus. Sue added that the Gideon campaign recently sent a check to us for \$200 even though they had previously returned the \$200 check that the SDTC had sent them during the last campaign. She has emailed their Chief of Staff to make sure this was not inadvertent. The Treasurer's Report was unanimously accepted.

Plans for the July 17 SDTC Caucus: Our caucus will be held at First Parish of Sudbury in the Commons on the second floor. Tania has attended a training sessions for Committee chairs. The caucus will be hybrid, with people attending both in person and on Zoom. Terry Lockhart, who has set up hybrid meetings for the Select Board, has been hired by the SDTC to set up our caucus as a hybrid meeting. He and Linda will be designated as co-hosts on Zoom. Colin Warwick will be the Zoom manager and will let people into the meeting. Linda will check off the status of the virtual attendees against her list of registered Sudbury Democrats. Nuha will be in charge of checking people off against the same voting list as they enter the Commons. In-person participants eligible to vote will be given colored paper cards, as at Town Meeting, and will have paper on which to write their choices for delegates. Linda Hensch-Gentile will tally the votes. Zoom participants will indicate their choices to Colin, the Zoom manager, via the Chat, and their number will be added to Linda's tally.

Tania will bring the SDTC banner, a Lady Liberty life-sized cutout, and American flags. Lisa Kouchakdjian agreed to provide two boxes of coffee from Dunkin'.

Carmine and Tania will divvy up between them the mandatory reading from the State Democratic Committee that is done at the start of the caucus. All participants must be at the meeting by 10:15 am. The nominations must start before 11 am.

The following people have agreed to run for our eleven delegate slots, either in person at this meeting or beforehand, through telephone outreach by Tania and Peg:

Male nominees: Henry Noer, Hank Sorett, Tom Hollocher, Carl Offner, John Reardon, and Andrew Bettinelli. Andrew will participate via Zoom.

Female nominees: Lisa Kouchakdjian, Jeanne Maloney, Nuha Muntasser, Aruna Pundit, and Jen Roberts. Jen will participate via Zoom.

Colin Warwick and Peg Espinola agreed to run for alternate, leaving two alternate spots open.

Legislative report by Carmine Gentile: The House and Senate have passed a budget and have sent it to Governor Baker. In past years he has issued one to two hundred line-item vetoes within the 10 days he has to do so. Carmine predicts most of the vetoes will be overridden quickly because "our financial situation in the Commonwealth has never been better." This is due both to an extraordinary surplus of State tax revenues plus \$5.2 billion of Federal dollars from the American Rescue Plan for Massachusetts with additional \$4Billion from the Jobs Act. This means that there will be money to allocate for projects long desired by cities and towns, including Sudbury. In particular, Sudbury has needed a sewer system complete with a package treatment plant to service businesses on a mile of Route 20 located near our town wells in order to safeguard our water supply. Carmine has been talking to Henry Hayes, the Town Manager, and to Dan Nason, Public Works Director, about these Town needs. He added, "All the [legislative] committees are having meetings and getting bills out."

Jen Roberts indicated that she is glad Carmine is speaking with Henry Hayes about a Comprehensive Wastewater Management Project [septic package treatment plant] near the Department of Public Works.

Carmine has already gotten \$100,000 for the Metrowest Free Medical Program, sponsored by Congregation Beth El, which serves many in nearby immigrant communities. Additionally he has obtained \$25,500 for radios for our police and fire departments, and \$10,000 for the Town Clerk's office. Statewide, he has been instrumental in getting \$50,000 for the National Lancers who have re-enacted Paul Revere's ride on Patriot's Day for over a hundred years and appear in many parades and ceremonies every year. He was the lead advocate for spending \$28 million for home care workers, making permanent a COVID emergency measure raising their wages and mandating that their wages be reexamined every other year, as is already done for nursing home staff.

Dhruba Sen asked Carmine why he voted 'no' on "the transparency bill." Carmine explained that there was no such bill. However, the House had voted on House Rules for the current session (and pointed out that most committees in the legislature are "Joint Committees" and governed by the joint rules adopted by both the House and Senate). Carmine explained in detail why he had joined 82% of House Progressives and 100% of other House Democrats (and Republicans) in 'no' votes on three of the suggested amendments to which Dhruba was referring. Ten or eleven of the fifty-five members of the progressive caucus of the House voted 'yes' on the amendments Sen referred to. With regard to making all committee votes public, he explained that the names of all committee members are public, those members present at a hearing or meeting of the committee are recorded, as are the number of votes cast on any bill, plus the names of those who voted no. The 'yes' votes can be inferred from the information that is provided.

Colin suggested that a site for some kind of intervention involving the new influx of funds might be the superfund site on Route 20 at Nobscot Road, where a gas station once existed. Carmine said that Colin was the first person to reach out to him regarding that site and invited Colin to work with him to get something done about it. Jen Roberts stated that the site, a third of an acre, is owned by an individual who lives out of state and is "waiting for the right buyer." It is unclear what remediation is needed. The idea of the Town acquiring the land, which is near a rail trail, has come up before. A possible use of the site would be for a pocket park.

Report from Jennifer Roberts, Select Board Chair and SDTC member: The issue of achieving a quorum in a hybrid or remote meeting came up. Jen replied that one can, indeed, have a quorum remotely. She found the hybrid Select Board meeting "pretty cool" but said that the Board has now reverted to remote meetings since permission to hold public meetings remotely has been extended to April 1. By that time it is hoped that a better hybrid experience will have been developed.

Bruce Freeman Rail Trail: The Planning Department is in the middle of the 75% design phase. The Planning Department is working hard to meet the "very tight timeline" for completing it.

The Select Board is working on its financial policies and on displaying them publicly on the Town website. "There has been a lot of good progress."

There will be a hearing on the Select Board bylaws later in July. A decision must be made regarding fall Town Meeting by the end of July.

On June 23 the Board held a meeting on the problem of anti-Semitic incidents in the schools. The Board reached out to the Anti-Defamation League for help. It was decided that this issue is more in the purview of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission than that of the Board.

During the **open discussion on local issues**, Hank Sorett expressed his view that a sewer project would be a mistake because it would encourage further commercial development, threatening to turn Route 20 into another Route 9. Jen said she is in favor of "redevelopment" rather than new development--"we are an outlier in having NO sewer in the community," she stated, compared to comparable towns in the area. Carmine expressed agreement on the need for such a project and pointed out that when the leaching field for the nursing home on the corner of Horsepond and Route 20 failed, the Town lost a large stand of trees. He added that the need to protect our water supply has been a consideration in many of the projects undertaken in Sudbury during his forty years here.

Democratic vacancy on the Board of Registrars: Tania explained that we need to submit three names to the Town Clerk to fill the Democratic vacancy on the Board of Registrars. Only one of the three will serve. She described the job as a relatively easy one, involving oversight of the counting of overseas voter ballots and also being available for a recount, if necessary. The Registrar cannot be an officer of the SDTC or host a partisan fundraiser. Marilyn Unger-Riepe agreed to have her name submitted. Previous to tonight's meeting John McQueen said that he might also be willing.

August meeting and potluck: The August meeting of the SDTC will be on August 11, starting at 6 pm, at the home of Sue Rushfirth. It is expected that this meeting will be brief. Following the meeting there will be a potluck supper. The plan is to meet outdoors, weather permitting. Tania will reach out to our State senators, Mike Barrett and Jamie Eldridge, and invite them to attend as well.

New business: Hank Sorrett informed us that he is submitting a privacy plank for the Democratic platform. As Hank sent it to Committee members just prior to this meeting, Tania suggested we read it and discuss it at a later date. There will be an in-person platform hearing for congressional districts 4 and 5 on August 9, in Framingham.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Peg Espinola, Secretary