

Minutes of the September 8, 2021 Meeting of the Sudbury Democratic Town Committee [final copy]

The September 8, 2021 meeting of the Sudbury Democratic Town Committee was called to order on Zoom by Tania Vitvitsky, Chair, at 7:02 pm. Also attending were Vice-Chair Carmine Gentile, Outreach Coordinator Nuha Muntasser, Secretary Peg Espinola, and members Colin Warwick, Hank Sorett, Jeanne Maloney, Henry Noer, Lisa Kouchakdjian, Tom Hollocher, Jen Roberts, John McQueen, Marilyn Unger-Riepe, Andrew Bettinelli, Eva Fridman and Carl Offner. Treasurer Sue Rushfirth was unable to attend. Ravi Simon, Carmine's legislative aide, attended as a guest, as well as Dhruba Sen and Chris Lorant.

Nominations for Registrar: Tania announced that she had submitted three names to the Town Clerk as potential members of the Board of Registrars: John McQueen, Marilyn Unger-Riepe and Colin Warwick. The Town Clerk has made it clear that three names must be presented. It is understood that John McQueen is the person most interested in the position.

The minutes of the July 14, 2021 SDTC meeting, which had been sent to the members on August 31, were approved.

Treasurer's Report: The Annual Financial Report for September 2020 to September 2021 was approved as sent to the membership on September 8 prior to the meeting. It was noted that we currently have 28 members and that the balance in our account as of August 8, 2021 was \$618.20. Tania stated that she plans to discontinue our post office box, which cost us \$246 last year, and instead list her own address for SDTC mail. The box is rarely used. Colin Warwick raised the question as to why we pay almost \$70 in bank fees each year. He will send Treasurer Sue Rushfirth an email regarding this issue. The comment was made that we need to raise more money.

MassDems Platform: Tania reminded the Committee that the deadline for submitting platform amendments is 11:59 pm on September 9. Tania had sent out a link to the membership to use to submit an amendment. The required delegate signatures--200--must be submitted by September 10th. Hank Sorett has submitted two platform amendments, one on gun control and one on privacy. They are numbers nine and ten on the list. Tania will send a link to SDTC delegates and alternates indicating how they can "sign" the proposed amendments by casting preliminary votes for them. (This does not commit them to later votes should they make it onto the final ballot.)

A voter ID number is necessary for Convention delegates and alternatives to vote. Some of the delegates present at the September meeting did not have their voter ID numbers yet, even though they had paid the convention fee. Tania urged them to follow up with MassDems to get their ID numbers, as they are necessary for voting. Resolutions, charter amendments and platform amendments will be emailed to delegates, with statements for and against, on September 14. Votes must be cast by electronic or telephonic ballot between September 14 and September 20th at 5 pm. The results of the voting and the 2021 party platform with amendments approved by the Convention delegates will be emailed on September 23 to delegates and alternatives and announced at the virtual Convention on September 25. About three thousand delegates ultimately will be able to vote on the amendments that get 200 preliminary votes. [An option to vote for amendments with only 130 signatures was added after our September meeting.]

Hank Sorett was given some time to discuss his two proposed platform amendments, which he had also made available to SDTC members in advance of the meeting. He announced that he might be travelling to Texas or working remotely with the Center for Reproductive Freedom and Unitarian Universalist clergy around appealing the new Texas anti-abortion legislation--Hank has extensive appellate experience. In addition to the privacy concerns inherent in the abortion issue, Hank is disturbed by the amount of electronic surveillance that now exists in many areas of our lives and that "shouldn't happen without an electronic warrant except in extraordinary circumstances." He gave examples. Another issue is "the right to be forgotten on the Internet."

Colin Warwick raised an objection to Hank's proposed gun control amendment because it takes aim at the Second Amendment. Such a platform, he thinks, is certain to result in Democratic losses. A brief debate on this issue ensued.

Carmine Gentile asked delegates to vote for Amendment #20, supporting the We the People Act, which would overturn Citizens United by creating a constitutional amendment to allow regulation of campaign contributions.

Legislative Report by State Representative Carmine Gentile:

List of Carmine's activities since our July 14th meeting: Testified at a hearing of the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing in favor of a bill clarifying rate setting processes for home health and home care services (H737); participated in a field trip to Gloucester, Newbury and Newburyport sponsored by the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture; met with Framingham Fair Housing Commission to discuss American Rescue Plan funds; celebrated the Department of Conservation and Recreation's acquisition of 33 acres of forest and meadow in Marlborough on Broadmeadow

Street, connecting with Callahan State Park--"many years in the making"; attended Council of State Governments meeting, Committee on Energy and the Environment, where he heard the keynoter explain that we can go electric in 10 years by using solar, wind and batteries for \$2 trillion; spoke with constituents on developing playgrounds accessible by children with disabilities throughout the state, for which he is preparing legislation; welcomed State Education Commissioner Jeff Riley to the Curtis Middle School where he spoke with staff; reached out to higher education chairs to discuss COVID Red Zone concerns with UMass and state university presidents (as well as with community college presidents--less of a problem); marched in the Labor Day parade in Marlborough; saw to it that the Sudbury liquor license bill ((H3895) was passed by the House and sent on to the Senate. Carmine was scheduled to testify on Sept. 9 before the Joint Committee on Ways and Means and the House Committee on Federal Stimulus, where he will advocate for funding to enable all new municipal public construction to be net zero, with no use of fossil fuels--essentially adding 10% to construction expenses while dramatically reducing heating and air conditioning costs. The money could come at least in part from American Rescue Plan funds. He will also advocate for funding for charging stations to accommodate transition to electric vehicles.

Other news from the State House:

- \$200 million appropriated on July 15 for municipal road maintenance and construction (signed by Gov. Baker, July 16).
- Sports betting bill passed on July 22 by the House, 156 to 3; the bill went on to the Senate Ways and Means Committee.
- In late August Governor Baker filed a supplemental budget bill, section 80 of which would rescind the home health care aide and home care aide hourly rate add-ons that Carmine had put into the budget. Carmine stated that with the add-ons, workers are averaging only \$14.50-\$15 per hour from their employers, who receive about \$29/hour from the state, or 53% of what their employees receive.

Report on Town Government from Jen Roberts, Select Board chair:

Diversity and Inclusion Commission: The Select Board interviewed six candidates for three open positions. All were excellent, making it difficult to choose. The Commission presented its first quarterly update, which was "great." They would like to obtain a consultant. The Select Board inquired how this might be funded

Update from the Health Department Regarding COVID: The director, William Murphy, is particularly concerned about cases among seniors in the community, most of which have been breakthrough cases of vaccinated individuals. There have been four cases so far in the schools, which do not yet have pool testing. The mask mandate will continue for the foreseeable future in public indoor spaces in Sudbury.

Select Board review of financial policies: The Board has been working on Financial Policies since February. A first draft of the report is being reviewed by the FinCom and by the Capital Improvement Advisory Committee. The Town is also conducting a study on bringing sewer to parts of Sudbury including Rte. 20. Previously Town Meeting voted \$300,000 for the study, and has been reporting back to the Town on the progress that has been made.

Sewataro Use Policies: The Board is looking at guidelines going forward and is considering the question of usage fees for the grounds which the Town acquired.

Also noted: The Board has learned that the New City Micro Creamery, a popular Hudson destination, wants to open a new shop in the Meadow Walk complex.

Sudbury Protest Group News: Tania shared that the Sudbury Protest Group, which includes several members of the Democratic Town Committee, will have a rally on Friday, September 17 at 5 pm. entitled "**Finish the Job for the People,**" as part of a nationwide event on that day to encourage passage of the Freedom to Vote Act, as it is now called. The Act would protect voting rights from efforts to curtail them, such as has happened in many states around the country.

Other Items:

Henry Noer reported that he has been in touch with Beverly Guild, our longtime former chair, who is still living in her home in Sudbury.

We voted to formally thank Sue and Terry Rushfirth for hosting our successful August potluck, which was well attended and included speeches by two Democratic candidates running in 2022, Rep. Tammy Gouveia for Lt. Governor, and Chris Dempsey for State Auditor. The food contributions were abundant, varied and delicious.

In response to a question by Marilyn Unger-Riepe we received clarification about the Registrar position. It is a three-year position, and precludes membership on any other Town Board or Committee as well as certain other political activities.

Finally, we discussed dates for future SDTC meetings this year. Carl Offner has a conflict with Monday and Wednesday evenings, when he teaches at UMass Boston. The issue with Tuesdays is that the Select Board meets then, on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month, but not ALWAYS on the 2nd and 4th. The Executive Committee will consider this issue at its next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:07 pm.

Peg Espinola, Secretary