

## **Minutes of the October 13, 2021 Meeting of the Sudbury Democratic Town Committee [final copy]**

The October 13, 2021 meeting of the Sudbury Democratic Town Committee was called to order on Zoom by Tania Vitvitsky, Chair, at 7:03 pm. Also attending were Vice-Chair Carmine Gentile, Treasurer Sue Rushfirth, Secretary Peg Espinola, and members Henry Noer, Lisa Kouchakdjian, Colin Warwick, John McQueen, Hank Sorett, Marilyn Unger-Riepe, John Reardon, Andrew Bettinelli, Jen Roberts, Barbara Ryan, Carl Offner, and Eva Fridman. Additional attendees included guests Ravi Simon, legislative aide to Carmine Gentile, and Kara LaTreize, our representative on the Democratic State Committee.

### **Announcements and communications to/from the Committee:**

Tania Vitvitsky announced that John McQueen has been appointed to the Board of Registrars.

Tania will be going to Washington next week for an event at the Ukrainian embassy. She has made contact with Assistant Speaker Clark's Legislative Director, Steven Thornton, who offered to have a meeting with her over Zoom. She will convey to him that the Executive Committee of the SDTC has agreed that its first priority is passage of the Freedom to Vote Act. She will ask him how it relates to the John Lewis act, and what the timetable will be, as well as the action plan, to make it happen. This will be Tania's third formal contact with Clark's office since Clark was elected to Congress in 2013.

**Acceptance of the minutes of the September 8, 2021 meeting:** The minutes as they were sent to the Committee earlier were accepted unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report:** We have \$603.16 in our account. The only outflow was for two months of bank fees. All but two members are paid up for 2021. Sue Rushfirth, Treasurer, commented that "early payment of 2022 dues" by members would be welcome. The suggested amount is \$50. The Treasurer's Report was accepted unanimously.

### **Report from Representative Carmine Gentile on legislative happenings and redistricting:**

MA State Senator Diana DiZoglio, who is running for State Auditor, has asked to speak to us for twenty minutes at 7:30 pm at our November meeting. There were no objections. The SDTC already heard from Chris Dempsey, the other candidate for this position, at our August gathering.

Carmine described two bills that have been passed by the House this month. The first, a Senate bill, "allows all of us to continue to receive chicken and pork at our supermarkets." The bill, which enjoyed the support of both animal rights groups and farmers, brings us into compliance with other states' regulation of chicken and pig housing

The second bill mandates that every school district have breakfast and lunch programs that do not result in "food-shaming" of students for unpaid bills. Each district must create a committee to assure that every student is fed regardless of ability to pay.

**Funds for Sudbury:** Sudbury has received \$2.9 million in ARPA funds and will receive another \$2.9 million. Carmine is trying to get \$20 million in additional funding for a sewer along the business section of route 20 and a sewage treatment plant, and possibly other money as well, out of an ARPA and state surplus revenue bill in November, otherwise other funding legislation next year. .

**Redistricting results:** Senator William Brownsberger and Representative Mike Moran, co-chairs of the Joint Committee on Redistricting, have issued a report that creates thirteen new minority/majority House districts in addition to the 20 we already have. Carmine lost his one precinct in Framingham and two of his four precincts in Marlborough as part of that process, while picking up two precincts in Concord ( and one in Lincoln). He kept all of Sudbury. Rep. John Lewis of Framingham lost much of his district; instead, he will get most of the district previously represented by Rep. Maria Robinson, who is awaiting Senate confirmation as Assistant Secretary of Energy for Electricity in the Biden administration. Senator Mike Barrett will no longer represent any precincts in Sudbury; all of Sudbury will now be in Senator Jamie Eldridge's district. State Democratic Committeewoman Kara LaTreize will also represent all of Sudbury.

Congressional districts have yet to be announced. Due to population loss in the western part of the state, some changes are to be expected.

### **Report from Select Board Chair Jen Roberts on Select Board and local issues:**

**ARPA funds:** Jen elaborated on the subject of Sudbury and ARPA funding that Carmine had introduced. Sudbury has received \$2.9 million out of a total of \$5.9 million in eventual funding. There will be a public input process between now and November to help prioritize a list of potential projects to receive the funds, after which Town Manager Henry Hayes will bring proposals to the Select Board. ARPA funds were designated to be spent on projects that, broadly speaking, have some relationship to the COVID pandemic. These include such obvious targets as public health, but also more tangential ones such as outdoor recreation, especially parks. The time frame for disbursement of these funds is "at least two years," according to Jen. She added that this has been a "good year in free cash" with \$6 million available for additional projects.

**Traffic on Rte. 117:** Hank Sorett raised the issue of the potential for overwhelming traffic problems on Rte. 117 as the Melone property continues to be developed. He was particularly concerned about the absence of a dedicated lane for eastbound cars turning left into the housing complex and wondered if some funds could be dedicated to solving this potential problem. She added that the Select Board and the Planning Board are working on ways to improve traffic in the area, such as adding a traffic light at Mossman and Pantry. Jen suggested that the issue be discussed at "another place" and another time.

**Climate Emergency Declaration:** Sustainable Sudbury's Climate Emergency Working Group presented a draft resolution to the Select Board asking Sudbury to formally declare a climate emergency, so as to stimulate action to "manage and promote sustainability efforts in Sudbury." The proposed resolution would be presented to Town Meeting in 2022. Several other neighboring towns have already taken this step.

**Bruce Freeman Rail Trail:** Jen stated that this is "a pivotal year" for the project--"it HAS to happen this year"--and that the project manager and "a strong consultant" are making progress. In response to questions, Jen reviewed some of the history of the project and why it has taken so long to get to the future 100 per cent design stage. She said that "there is good momentum now" and that the project manager and the consultant team are very optimistic that the deadlines necessary to get state funding will be met. The project is scheduled to be advertised for construction by June of 2022. Tania mentioned how discouraging it is to experience functioning rail trails in neighboring towns while ours is yet to happen, while Barbara Ryan added that she was hit by a vehicle while walking and "I think [the Rail Trail] is critical." John McQueen described rail trails as "refuges from motorized traffic." He stated that on existing rail trails, 50 per cent are walkers and 50 per cent are cyclists.

**Fairbank Community Center:** The Permanent Building Committee and the project manager for the Fairbank Community Center construction are going through a process of "value engineering" to deal with COVID-related impacts on the construction industry involving materials and shipping costs. Certain parts of the project may have to be postponed. Lisa Kouchakdjian explained that while she and Kay Bell are members of the Commission on Disability, they have become involved in the planning of the Center as "constituents, not as COD members." They are requesting inclusion of certain elements in the final design, including universal changing rooms near key elements of the Center (such as the pool), and wiring imbedded in the walls so that people with hearing aids and cochlear implants can receive sound directly into their devices.

**National Disability Awareness Month:** October is National Disability Awareness Month. Lisa Kouchakdjian described the **Pin Project** that she has been engaged in. She has been distributing the bronze, gold and white pins--based on a flag designed by the first professional ballet dancer with Downs Syndrome--to members of Town committees and boards as well as to teachers and school administrators, with instructions to try to wear them daily during October. They will also be sold at the Historical Society's museum and gift shop, with proceeds to benefit the center. The purpose of the pins is to raise awareness of people with disabilities. Lisa read the Commission on Disability's statement on behalf of people with disabilities, and the importance of support for inclusion, a goal that should transcend political differences but that should resonate with Democrats especially since "this party has been the party of the people."

**Valerie Fletcher Event:** Valerie Fletcher is the Executive Director of the Institute of Human Centered Design, the organization that managed the Town's self-evaluation regarding ADA compliance. She will be giving a talk to our community about brain-based disability that will be live on Sudbury TV on November 10 at 7 pm, as well as later on YouTube. She will touch on the ways in which the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) doesn't really address brain-based disabilities such as mental illness.

Carmine mentioned the impending crisis for as many as 17,000 + home care residents starting November 1, when the 37 per cent of home care workers who are not vaccinated would lose their jobs, per Governor Baker's order. He considers this to be a disability issue "which hasn't been picked up on," and has reached out to the Governor, EOHS Secretary Sudders, and legislative leadership.

**Domestic Violence Awareness Month:** Sue Rushfirth, who is Chair of the Sudbury-Wayland-Lincoln Domestic Violence Round Table, described the efforts of her group in cooperation with others to "light up public buildings and faith communities" in purple this month, "the color of courage and compassion." The lights are also a symbol of "reaching out the light" to survivors. Sue described how the Roundtable, which was founded in 1989, has expanded its focus from relationship violence (including dating violence) to include elder abuse as well, and emotional, psychological and spiritual abuse as well as physical abuse. Goals of the Roundtable are "education, advocacy and support." The Roundtable also includes a White Ribbon group of men who are allies and change agents on behalf of victims of domestic abuse. The Roundtable is grateful to the Select Board for declaring March of 2021 Shadow Pandemic Awareness Month.

**Speakers for Upcoming Meetings:** It was decided that Carmine would contact Sonia Chang-Diaz, who is running for Governor, and Diana DiZoglio, who is running for State Auditor, and offer them opportunities to speak to us at future meetings. Tania will get in touch with Senator Mike Barrett about his discussing the environmental legislation he has sponsored. Henry Noer suggested that we might think about having other speakers who are NOT running for office in 2022 (such as Robert Reich). There was consensus that we should continue to meet for now on Zoom, at the same time that we acknowledged the losses that not meeting in person entails.

**Holiday party:** Marilyn Unger-Riepe agreed to chair a holiday planning committee; Peg, Linda, Carmine and Lisa agreed to serve on it as well. The party will be virtual, as it was last year (and hopefully as much fun as it was last year).

**State Democratic Convention discussion:**

There was a brief discussion of the virtual State Democratic Convention that took place in September, over a period of many days. The one resolution that was passed by the Convention delegates was to endorse a bill filed by Carmine to facilitate employee purchase and ownership of privately held companies when they are up for sale.

Hank Sorett reported on his two proposed amendments. The amendment involving surveillance and privacy did not get on the ballot, for lack of sufficient signatures. The amendment involving repeal and replacement of the 2nd Amendment to facilitate more effective gun control was passed, but was "buried," according to Hank.

Only a thousand of perhaps 3000 delegates actually voted on the amendments, due to a great deal of confusion and difficulty in obtaining voting ID numbers and the sheer overwhelming number of amendments to be read and voted on in a short amount of time.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm. A decision regarding date of the November meeting was postponed and will be determined by the Executive Committee.

Peg Espinola, Secretary