

## **Minutes of the January 12, 2022 Meeting of the Sudbury Democratic Town Committee**

The January 12, 2022 meeting of the Sudbury Democratic Town Committee was called to order on Zoom by Chair Tania Vitvitsky at 7:05 pm. Also attending were Carmine Gentile, Vice Chair, Sue Rushfirth, Treasurer, Peg Espinola, Secretary, Nuha Muntasser Outreach Coordinator, and members Linda Hensch-Gentile, Lisa Kouchakdjian, Colin Warwick, Hank Sorett, Carl Offner, Eva Fridman, Jen Roberts, Henry Noer, Andrew Bettinelli, Barbara Ryan, and Aruna Pundit. Ravi Simon attended as a guest.

**Announcements:** The SDTC will be a co-sponsor of a Force Multiplier event later in January at which Senator Warnock will speak. Force Multiplier is also sponsoring an event with Adam Schiff. The coalition of organizations involved in the nationwide January 6 vigils has thanked Peg and Tania for organizing our own vigil in Sudbury, in conjunction with the Sudbury Protest Group [now entitled Sudbury Stands for Democracy].

**Minutes:** The minutes of the November 10, 2021 meeting were unanimously approved.

**Treasurer's Report:** Closing balance is \$1480.66. Seven members have paid their voluntary dues for 2022, for a total of \$450. The bank fee of \$7.50 was debited from the account. On December 10 the Committee received a refund of \$350 from the Biden Victory Fund, over a year after our check was cashed by the Fund. No explanation for the refund was given. Sue Rushfirth will investigate. The report was unanimously accepted. Sue pointed out that one can donate to the Committee via our website. One can choose to include \$2.00 to cover the 3.95% fee that is assessed for donating in this manner. (\$2 is the fee if you just donate the \$50.)

**MLK Day of Service Fund Drive:** The drive will be held, as it was last year, in Lisa Kouchakdjian's driveway. It is scheduled for 10 am to 3 pm and will again benefit the Sudbury Food Pantry. Sue will pick up banana boxes in which we will collect and sort the donations. Several people volunteered to take shifts during the day. Tania will bring a Freedom to Vote sign and the SDTC banner. Lisa will place signs on Peakham and at the end of her driveway, and the Kouchakdjians will drop the boxes off at the Food Pantry after three. As the weather report for that day is iffy, people may drop their donations off at the Kouchakdjians' porch over the weekend.

**Massachusetts Nominating Convention and the Sudbury Democratic Caucus:** Our caucus is scheduled for February 12. There was no objection to our having a fully virtual caucus this year. Tania will host the caucus; Colin Warwick is undertaking the technical training to run it as a Zoom event. Once the caucus is officially posted Tania will ascertain how many candidates will want to make presentations at the caucus. She will have a list of Sudbury registered Democratic voters, any of whom may run for delegate to the June convention in support of the candidates of their choice (not just SDTC members).

While the State Democratic Party is hoping for a live convention, Carmine stated that "the likelihood is that it will be remote again."

**Legislative Report (Carmine Gentile):** The House and Senate passed a bill on genocide education, signed by the Governor, that will enable all Massachusetts high school students to do a project on one or another of the historical genocides. An important bill now being considered is the Work and Family Mobility Act, which would allow undocumented immigrants to obtain drivers' licenses. It is supported by Maura Healy and over 45 police chiefs in the Commonwealth, as well as two-thirds of district attorneys.

Carmine is also involved in the work to move forward two bills related to the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision: H3658/S2402 Resolutions for a United States Constitutional Amendment, which would address the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision in which corporations were recognized as persons with the ability to make unlimited political expenditures, thus undercutting states' ability to regulate such expenditures; and H36576, which would continue the Citizens Commission Concerning a Constitutional Amendment for Government of the People, and enable them to fill vacancies of commissioners who resign. A discussion ensued regarding the possible dangers of a Constitutional Convention to such freedoms as abortion rights and the free

press. Carmine pointed out the safeguards that are in place to prevent ratification of amendments that do not have wide support nationwide, such as the requirement that 38 states ratify an amendment before it becomes law. Carmine stated that a separate amendment simply allowing states to regulate campaign contributions might have more bipartisan support than one that would also restrict corporate and union actions beyond the area of political spending.

**A motion in support of these bills passed.**

In response to a question by Jen Roberts, Carmine stated that the legislature is set to pass an extension of the more liberal mail-in voting regulations put in place during the COVID pandemic, and which would expire in April otherwise.

**Town Election:** Sudbury town elections will be held on March 28. The deadline to pull papers to run is February 2; signatures must be submitted by February 4. SDTC members Jen Roberts and Lisa Kouchakdjian are both running for the two open positions on the Select Board. Tania pointed out that the Committee cannot support particular candidates, but individual members may do so. On the other hand, she added, "we do need to talk about issues." Jen requested that she be allowed to discuss issues and her candidacy at our next meeting.

Carmine stated that he will be talking to the Town Manager about making it allowable to collect signatures once again at the Transfer Station. Hank Sorett suggested raising the constitutional issues involved in NOT allowing this to happen. Carmine pointed out that Wayland has a system for doing so safely.

Tania raised the issue of whether and how to bring up issues on social media, such as One Sudbury, the Bulletin Board and Sudbury Action. This seems particularly important given the fact that the local paper is no longer the forum for such discussion as it once was. **Discussion TBC.**

**Jen Roberts' Select Board Report:** 1. The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail--Jen is "cautiously optimistic" it will be ready for the construction advertising goal date in June, with construction to begin in the fall. 2. The Board is considering what to do with \$6.5 million in free cash and \$5.9 million in ARPA funds. A consultant has been hired to help review which projects should get ARPA funding. An article has been proposed to provide money to upgrade the AV systems planned for the Fairbank Community Center. 3. The Sewataro property is also under discussion, specifically the issue of whether to extend the agreement with the camp operator. 4. The Select Board is reviewing its goals, which include: completion of BFRT, allocation of ARPA funds, planning the future of Sewataro, revisiting the LSRHS agreement, advancing sustainability and climate change initiatives, and normalizing some transportation options. The Board is also planning to invite Carmine Gentile, Senator Barrett, and Jamie Eldridge to give legislative updates. Tania urged more of us to watch Select Board proceedings; Lisa pointed out that the meetings are recorded and can be watched later.

**Other local issues:** Marilyn Unger-Riepe brought up the issue of polarization and hate that have entered the arena of local as well as national politics. There was agreement that we need to be push back at the local level. Tania mentioned that the Sudbury Protest Group, which is separate from the SDTC but has overlapping goals, might well resume its standouts, perhaps on a monthly basis.

Hank mentioned that Kate Donoghue, whom most of us know, is running for a seat in the legislature in Westford. He also reiterated his objection to the attempt by the Herb Chambers organization to add another automobile dealership and service center to the Rte. 20 corridor, and asked others to join him in doing so.

**Letter to Congresswoman Katherine Clark Regarding the Jan. 6 Hearings:** The Committee voted unanimously to send a letter to Congresswoman Clark, as drafted, asking her to "press for prime-time hearings by the January 6 Committee." The letter will go up on our website.

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.**

Peg Espinola, Secretary