

Rhinebeck Democrats Club  
February 15, 2024  
Annual Meeting

Called to order: 6:05

Attendees: John Rossi, Shirley Stone. Sandy Zito. Susan Ragusa, Mel Donaldson, Bob Donaldson, Julie Zito, May Rossi, Jesse Lurie, Pat Evans, Eleanor Pupko, Roger Kwon, Jesse Lurie, Joanne Meyer, Laura Brown.

Welcome

After John extended a welcome, attendees introduced themselves to the group.

Treasurer's Report

Sandy noted the club's balance as being \$166.60.

There has been no banking business since October after the joining of three new members.

Annual Election of Steering Committee Officers

According to club bylaws, elections for club officers are to be held in January but with the time and work involved in the recent village-election campaigning, the vote was moved to February.

Members were invited to step forward if they were interested in holding one of the club offices. Since no one expressed an interest, it was decided that the current officers would remain in their respective roles: John Rossi and Shirley Stone as co-chairpersons, Sandy Zito as treasurer, Susan Ragusa as corresponding secretary, and Mel Donaldson as recording secretary. John motioned to accept this slate with Shirley seconding. The slate was unanimously approved by voting members.

Under Consideration for Ratification

Sub-Committee Proposals

There were proposals for two additional sub-committees brought before the members.

1. Civic Awareness

In keeping with two of the club's purposes: "To foster accountability, accessibility and transparency from elected public and Democratic Party officials" and "To further the interest and participation of all citizens in the civic affairs of our community", a proposal was made to set up a coordinated effort to have observers present at the meetings of both the village and town boards, as well as those of their respective planning boards.

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The observers would record the discussions and actions taken at these meetings and submit these observations to the club. In turn, the club would post these reports on its website for the benefit of all residents.

In order to allow light scheduling for volunteers of this sub-committee, it is hoped that a good number of people would be interested in taking part. Further discussion is needed to finalize pertinent details. This committee would be co-chaired by Mel and Bob Donaldson.

## 2. Vote to Victory

In her continued efforts to: educate voters; encourage residents to be more civically involved; get out more votes and engage more Democrats in general, Jesse Lurie has proposed a sub-committee to help in this mission. Essentially, her idea centers on having Democrats involved and visible throughout the year, as opposed to just the weeks leading up to elections. Part of this would involve sponsoring or attending events where Democrats are typically, already present. This committee would be co-chaired by Jesse Lurie.

Each committee was unanimously approved by the steering committee.

## Amendments to Bylaws

The bylaws of the RDC were created, in part, by mirroring the best practices of other Democrat clubs. The understanding was that modifications would be made, as needed, over time.

- One bylaw amendment consideration was Article IV: Membership, #2. Voting Members, item d which listed some of the stipulations as to whom would be eligible to vote on club issues. The proposal was to have these restrictions deleted. This change was brought to a motion by Pat Evans and seconded by Shirley Stone. The amendment was passed.

- Another bylaw brought up for review is found in Article IV: Membership, #5, Acceptance and Duration of Membership which addresses when applicants can become members. It is now stated that the applicant becomes a member 14 days after submitting the application. The change would state the applicant could become a member before the completion of the 14-day wait period with the approval of the steering committee. This proposal was tabled for future discussion as a member did not feel fully prepared to understand and vote on the change.

- The last bylaw brought up for modification was found in Article VIII: Committees, #3 Committee Membership. After a brief discussion, it was decided that any member, not only voting members, would be allowed to join a club's sub-committee, just as they would be allowed to propose the creation of a committee as stated in item #2 of the same article.

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Speaker Series Report

Susan Ragusa informed the club that a local resident is writing a book about local, municipal governments and was being considered by the Speaker Series committee as a potential presenter in March.

New, Old, Other Business

Eleanor Pupko brought to the club's attention confusion that many village residents have regarding the need to specifically request absentee ballots for the upcoming village election even though they had requested and received ballots for the primary. To remedy the situation, Eleanor suggested that volunteers hand-deliver these ballots to the 90 residents this affects to ensure their ability to vote in March. Volunteers offered to help with the distribution.

Meeting adjourned: 7:03

Respectfully submitted,  
Mel Donaldson  
Recording Secretary