

Hartford County Meeting - March 10th, 2015

GUEST SPEAKER: Melissa Russell

MAIN SUBJECT: Legislation

Chair Darlene Burrell began the Hartford County Meeting at 9:30 am.

Thanks given to hosts Marie Fox and Linda Cultera for providing location for meetings.

Moderator training program-New trainers are needed - Darlene has completed the program - Carol Hurley is almost done with the training – Certified Moderator Trainers are: Darlene Burrell, Karen Lyons, Carole Young-Kleinfeld & Stuart.

Secretary's Report by Laura Wolfe. September 2014 minutes were approved. January 2015 minutes not done yet. It was recommended that the search function be used when using minutes as a reference.

Treasurer's Report by Sue Burnham. \$3 per registrar/\$6 per town is being collected to cover the cost of the raffle basket for the Spring Conference. Sue will be creating the raffle basket.

ROVAC President Melissa Russell - new legislation. Thanks given to all who went to the LOB for the hearing and who sent testimony. Our great effort was taken seriously and we were viewed as professionals. We should have a seat at the table. SOTS tried to get the bill past us, she did not consult Registrars or Town Clerks when she prepared this bill and this strategy obviously backfired. We will probably end up with some kind of legislative task force that will deal with the issues and ROVAC can expect to be included. The bill will codify how the task force is set up with a two year timeframe, so we don't expect a hasty resolution.

HB 6950 ROVAC's bill has many of the same elements, written in a slightly better way, so we are anticipating a compromise. For example the ROVAC bill allows the new two tier reporting system for every election not just state elections. There are some flaws in the current SOTS bill, examples: it requires the head moderator to return to an empty polling place two days later to publicly announce the results, and that all of the results need to be reported in three days to the Town Clerk - yet provisional ballots are counted for six days after an election.

We found out that certification cannot be mandated for elected officials, there is a Constitutional problem with it, but we plan to still go forward with it. The Town Clerks aren't mandated to be certified, but most of them are, regardless of being elected or appointed. We want to move forward with the certification program. The SOTS bill was vague on the high speed audits, so we would like our bill HB 6950 to go forward. We would like a task force that would be appointed, to discuss all of the big reforms being talked about: how many Registrars, 1, 2 or 3, appointed or elected, regionalization and recall provisions. We could create a process to remove a Registrar which mirrors what the Town Clerks have, with lots of due process protection. The head of the SEEC told us that their process is so protective, they actually have never used it. We are not done yet.

It was a really good day for ROVAC. In particular, Sue Larson's testimony covered so many points, so quickly - the legislators really appreciated that. It was clear to the committee that we were professionals. It was also clear that Denise did not know the details of what was in her bill. She at one point said that towns could keep two Registrars if they wanted, but actually they can't if her bill passes as written. I was surprised that with all of her resources, advisors and attorneys, the Secretary seemed unprepared for the questions asked. She gave the committee members a big binder of materials, bigger than the budget that contained her testimony and supporting documentations. All of the testimony on this bill, either presented orally or submitted in writing will be available online. You can also still watch the hearing on CTN. It was a very long day, the SOTS testimony was two and a half hours, and the last presenters were around 9:30 pm. The most effective testimony came from the Registrars who testified with their counterparts, clearly demonstrating that we can work together professionally.

Ann Clark thanked Melissa for the excellent interview on NPR that she did. It was fun sitting at the same table as Denise to talk about election issues. When we discussed the non-partisan part of the bill, she couldn't explain it. She has not taken a meeting with us or communicated since introducing this bill, so I did not know what to

expect. She is a lot less brave when she is sitting with a Registrar or when she delivered her testimony than she is when talking with a reporter from the newspaper. Denise was aware that Registrars would be coming to testify, but she was not expecting the large numbers that came and how many towns and cities were represented. 28 towns gave live testimony and many more submitted written testimony.

Urania Petit said that Common Cause said they were testifying because they were asked by the SOTS to testify on the importance of professionalizing the office, they were not informed on the other aspects of this bill. Officials on the national level do not support this bill (as written). Urania was also able to speak with the three members of the Elections Assistance Commission, and one of them has agreed to speak at our conference. They appreciate how Connecticut is run and the work we do, except Hartford of course. We got the President of IACREOT, Michael Winn, to submit testimony against the bill, that as a national standard they want to see more bipartisan election officials/efforts, especially at the local level. IACREOT will be honoring Judi Beaudreau at their next conference, which will be held in Colorado. It would be nice if ROVAC could send someone to be there for it. Glastonbury's Town Clerk is a member.

The Clerk's association was on the fence originally and considered supporting it, but then their membership weighed in and said we don't want this.

It was clear during testimony that SOTS does not understand the Registrar's job. The proposed requirement for all Registrars to have four year college degrees was a case in point. The head of committee questions why a two year degree wouldn't be perfectly adequate. A college degree should not be part of the requirements to be a registrar. Denise claimed that the current requirement is to be an envelope licker.

Denise incorrectly stated that unaffiliated cannot be poll workers currently and her bill will fix that. She said a lot of things that are not true.

Hartford has their bill HB 6904 out, to enable towns to choose how they want to have their registrars, one, two or three. So Hartford could get rid of their elected registrars and put in an appointed registrar. The problem is that it won't stop at Hartford. Allowing one town to do it will put pressure on other towns to try to game the system and let the majority party be in charge. We also need to make sure that the public and the legislators are aware that there is bipartisan leadership at the polls with the assistant registrars representing both Registrars and their parties, two sets of eyes.

SOTS said she was putting together data on cost savings with just one Registrar. There is no evidence data or analysis that supports that. OLR did a report on compensation and benefits of Registrars, but no study on the impact of this bill. During our radio interview, Denise had to kind of agree with me that just because you change how the job is structured, it won't impact how much work needs to be done. It is going to cost what it costs to run an election. Some towns may see some short term benefit by having assistants do more of the work for less money, but if two part-time positions become one that could cost more in benefits required. This is an important message for your town managers, first selectman or mayors, this bill will not save money. This is also a good letter to the editor to explain that this is not a one day a year job. If you can add in the importance of two sets of eyes, that would be great. Even Denise is using the term when defending her bill.

The GAE wants to see the conference attendance sheets for the conferences. One of the issues that Denise has effectively used is that although there is a statute that requires Registrars to take 10 hours of training annually, there is a note at the bottom of it that says nothing in this statute shall compel you to do it. We plan to show that a lot of Registrars are taking the training. We should also submit the county meetings as trainings. Darlene has been keeping track of attendance and can share that information. We need to back up what we are saying with facts.

Regarding who will handle the certification program, our bill specifies four registrars and a member of SOTS and a member of SEEC, with a registrar as chair. The program will be worked out with UConn using their different branches. The reason it has not been moving forward is not lack of funding, towns will pay the bulk of the costs. Denise's bill takes ROVAC out of the certification program and if applicable, it's successor organization. The reason that this certification program has been on hold, even though it is specified in statute, is because the certification wasn't mandatory, so providing the program wasn't required and the state had not provided any money in the budget to do it. Now, if the towns pay for it, there is no reason not to move forward. In the past the towns paid a share, but the state also had to cover some of the costs, so Susan Byciewicz disbanded the program.

There are 18 towns who haven't paid their dues to ROVAC. There are some perpetual towns who do not belong to ROVAC they include Roxbury, Chaplin, Naugatuck, Cornwall, East Haven, and Columbia. In SOTS's testimony, she cited the poor attendance figures for her webinars, only 40 Registrars attended one of them. There were three offered right before the election, but the calls were available online afterwards. Melissa made sure the legislative committee knew that many Registrars listened to it online, but this wasn't tracked by the Secretary. Legislators also need to understand that there is no pointing fingers at each other, saying it was their job. If you can't/aren't working with your counterpart, then two sets of work are getting everything done. Nothing should be missing. We are on a high wire together, if one of us starts to wobble, then we both fall. We need to help each other and keep each other balanced.

Only 40 Town Clerks are appointed, 129 are elected - that is 70%, OLR had a report on that.

Electronic pollbooks are supposed to help reduce long lines. SOTS posted a 46 page document with the new specifications required. It appears that there aren't any pollbook vendors who currently can comply with these specs. So none of the currently used electronic pollbooks are eligible to be certified. This is so offensive to the SOTS Technology committee that was waiting to help craft the specifications, and was not consulted. The specs include requiring hard wired, CVRS style routers in every polling place. Denise would like to find bonding money, so that she can purchase one system for the whole state. This is not what the statute that passed asked for, the legislation we passed was intended to allow different vendors, styles to be available, to accommodate different towns with different needs and budgets. These specs do not take into consideration the many polling places that are being rented from churches or private schools. You can't force these places to put in equipment and wiring and to maintain them. This shows a lack of understanding of how many products are offered today that could be used by everyone. They are vetted and safe guarded, and are wonderful. It is great that pollworkers don't need to count the names cross off the official voter list at the end of the night, and to be able to download the who voted into CVRS instead of entering that information line by line.

Another point made at the hearing was that voters are finding it awkward and uncomfortable to go to the Registrars for help, because they are unaffiliated or from the other party. One of the representatives said that he personally felt this, so he supports this bill. You need to be non-partisan in your office and at elections.

The SOTS is having an election system management demo for the legislators. This is some type of end of night reporting that Denise alluded to in her testimony that no Registrar has seen or tested. There is an SOTS committee, with several Registrars as members, that is supposedly the End of Night Reporting committee. The committee members were supposed to be contacted for their input, and had only one meeting in the last year and a half. Ted mentioned this system at the Technology committee meeting.

Taffy sent an email to all Registrars asking for information on when their terms expired. That was in preparation for the bill to be effective upon passage. They realized they could not turn out elected officials, so they needed to know when they can go down to one.

What did the GAE committee think of the testimony? Some members seem to be supporting Denise's bill, as they have some specific issues with their Registrars. They were concerned about funding for training, that a certification program is needed and they wanted to know if they can require this training. Three members would not meet privately with ROVAC to discuss the bill. The Registrars did a very good job of not attacking, but just presenting our bill, and supporting what we do. The GAE committee had done their homework, and had very good questions and when they were drilling the Secretary they were pulling out information from our legislative group. Denise incorrectly said that she provided all of the materials and manuals that Registrars use - and that the manual of procedures was on her website. It is not, it is on the ROVAC website and it was written by our Handbook committee. She needed to ask for help from Ted and Jamie at some points. ROVAC also provided Registrars with big bright stickers, showing their support.

Going forward, we need to be professional when we go to these hearings. They are legal proceedings that go on the record so we need to avoid talking while someone is speaking, don't applaud, and act like you are in a courtroom. Dress the part, and act the part. You can go and don't need to speak.

We all do what we can do. If you can't go to the hearings please write testimony. We are opposed to HB 6904 - the Hartford bill and SB 1051 - the Secretary's bill. Support HB 6950 ROVAC's bill. If every town could do that, it would really be helpful, the legislative committee is well informed and they are reading what you send.

ROVAC Day will be on April 13th, and more than any other year we all need to be up there talking to our legislators. Invite them to join us, last year we did ice cream sundaes, and it was very successful. George Cody will be bringing more of his political memorabilia collection that seems to bring lots of legislators to us. Sullivan & LeShane do a very good job of organizing these events, and they bring in the legislators. They are excited to work for us and care about our cause. We weren't well represented previously, we just weren't an important client to Audrey's firm. Our search committee did an excellent job of vetting the proposals we were so impressed with this firm. Sullivan & LeShane wanted our business and gave us a huge discounted rate - this is something they are passionate about. They work for us 24/7. If they see someone socially, they are still advocating for us.

Convention Committee report by Ann Clark. Spring Conference will be April 22 to 24 in Cromwell. Education Day will be Wednesday, ROVAC Day (Elections and Bylaws Revision) Thursday and SOTS Day Friday. Colors are Red, White and Blue for Education Day; Casual Day for ROVAC day and Black and White for SOTS day. Chris Prue is the chair of the convention committee, and he is doing an excellent job. We looked at the Sheraton in Rocky Hill, the Marriott in Farmington and Southbury Crowne Plaza. The Sheraton is too small for us, it has no classrooms. The Marriott requires walking between the buildings and hard to find our way around and the prices were high. Southbury is the top contender, as they had the best proposal. It is easy to get to and adequate for our needs, it needs a little renovation, but the acoustics are very good in their classrooms and they gave us a good deal. We are still looking at our options beyond that. Possibly Foxwoods, Groton Marriott, Hartford Marriott. Chris knows all of the specs that we need for room sizes and lunch room turnover, he is all over this, he does a phenomenal job. Consider the Marriott in Windsor. You must pay your dues by March 23rd to have voting rights at the conference.

Audit Committee report by Linda Cultrera. No meetings, still no chair. The committee did not meet to close out their audit. So far no one wants to fill in, or run for it, or chair it. This is a statewide position that will be voted on at our annual meeting at our Spring Conference.

Education Committee report by Melissa Russell. Sue Burnham was not able to go to the meeting. We have two substitutes, Laura Wolfe and Linda Cultrera, but they were not called. Melissa Russell is the acting chair of the committee. This was a very hard committee to get going, nobody came forward to be acting chair. We met at the OPA offices in Hartford, in their conference room. Kathleen from Prospect agreed to chair the committee, Barbara from Franklin is going to help her as an unofficial vice chair. Chris Prue laid out the logistics of how the event is

going to run. We sketched out the classes. Kevin Ahern from the SEEC has been invited. There will be a class on High School and Voter Outreach. Patty LeShane will be coming to speak, she'll be doing one afternoon presentation. We will have a vendor appreciation hour, where you get to move around and talk to them. Gretchen from OPA will set up a polling place, which you will go through to try and spot what is wrong. It is designed to increase your knowledge of what to look out for. There will be a moderator training highlights class for everyone, not an actual training, but to go over useful information. Still working on it.

Acceptance letters are not to be sent by forwardable mail. Statute requires that envelopes be marked to return, not forward, if undeliverable. This is not a new law, but many Registrars are unaware of this.

In the Bylaws counties are required to appoint/reappoint members to standing committees annually. So in June we will need to vote on our county representatives for the standing committees.

Nominating Committee Report by Urania Petit. We received one nomination for President, one for Vice-President, one for Treasurer and one for Secretary. There were no nominations for the audit committee or for executive vice-president. Nominations are closed. It is still possible to nominate from the floor for any of the positions. For the vacancies we will have to nominate from the floor. It is your right to challenge any of those positions.

Technology Committee report by Ann Kilby. Minutes will be sent out. We have not been consulted for the specifications posted for electronic pollbooks or for the election night reporting system that is about to be demonstrated. Newington was asked to test the new election night reporting system this November. It requires the Town Clerk to stay on Election Night to finish the process. You can continue to use a non-certified electronic poll books, but you have to continue to mark off names on the paper official voter list. Pollbooks are optional. The new requirements include having a minimum of three electronic pollbook stations per polling place.

Ways and Means Committee Report presented by Darlene Burrell for Peter Gostin. The new logo idea was rejected by the ROVAC board. The ROVAC logo remains the same. There will be two gifts raffled off by Ways and Means at the next conference. This is addition to the county baskets.

ByLaws Committee report by Sharon Krawecki. Bylaw changes to be presented to the Board. There are a lot of small technical changes. A copy will be sent for review prior to the conference. Please let the committee know if you have any issues or questions about any of the changes. The way the committee chairs are chosen has been altered. The new bylaw will allow the President of ROVAC to nominate a chair directly, rather than a temporary chair, to ensure the chairperson will call meetings, be involved, and responsible. This allows committees to hit the ground running and be more professional. It eliminates time spent over contested chair positions. It shows faith in the President of ROVAC to choose responsible committee chairs. Melissa requested this change to get the organization moving forward.

Handbook Committee report by Darlene Burrell. We debated making this a permanent committee to deal with legislative changes. Links have to be constantly updated. One of the advantages of having this be a temporary ad-hoc committee is that you aren't required to have just one county representative, anyone who wants to help may join in. The handbook committee has gone through each section and changes are made as needed. Please let the committee know if you have a better way of performing tasks, it might be a better way and should be shared. We have created a list of best practices with the law behind it.

Motion to adjourn at 12:09 pm made by Marie Fox, seconded by Ann Clark. Motion passed unanimously.

Secretary Laura Wolfe