

ROVAC Litchfield County group

Meeting Minutes

Village Restaurant, Litchfield,, CT

June 20, 2023, 6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Melissa Russell of Bethlehem, Chair, Nancy Southard of Litchfield, Treasurer, Barbara Putnam of Litchfield, Secretary, Karen Martin of Barkhamsted, Karen Pfluger of Bethlehem, Susan Kelsey of Canaan Falls Village, Sherri Gray and Karen O'Dell of Colebrook, Brittany Mosimann of Cornwall, Debbie Shea of Harwinton, Maureen Brady and Therese Duncan of Kent, Jill Bigelow of Litchfield, Larry Sweeney of Morris, Debra Brown and Barbara Galvin of Plymouth, Jenny Law of Salisbury, Lydia Kalat and Joyce Pichette of Thomaston, Denise Arturi and Lois Pinney of Washington, Maurine Gambardella and Christine Shields of Watertown, Lisa Amatruda, Kathy Doyle, Dan Loney and Rosalie Manzi-Platt of Woodbury.

GUEST: Stephanie Thomas, Connecticut Secretary of State

SOCIAL TIME: Chairman Russell welcomed members to the meeting. She spoke at the beginning of social time. Chairman Russell noted that our last meeting was led by Ann-Marie Mastrianni, in June of 2022. Ann-Marie died in January of 2023, and Melissa Russell, her vice-chair, became the chairman. Chairman Russell indicated that she cannot keep up with the demands of this job along with her other obligations and responsibilities, and is seeking a new chair to lead the group. She thanked Barbara Putnam and Nancy Southard for arranging the meeting. She asked members to consider the chairmanship and would raise it for discussion later in the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER: Secretary Stephanie Thomas entered the meeting at 6:35 p.m. Chairman Russell called the meeting to order

Secretary of State Stephanie Thomas spoke to the group about several matters.

Secretary of State Thomas shared her background in consulting and non-profit fundraising. She served a single term in the CT State Legislature before running for Secretary of the State. There are several SOTS initiatives of interest shared with the group.

CIVIC LITERACY. One of her priorities is to increase civic literacy. She is touring the state with her "Connecting Connecti-cut" initiative, visiting a hair salon or barber shop in a different town every time she gets a haircut. She also conducts family trivia nights at local libraries.

POLL WORKER APPRECIATION. She encouraged us to arrange Poll Worker Appreciation events, where she will come and award certificates to long-serving poll workers. Secretary Thomas shared that several small towns could have a shared event if desired.

LEGISLATION.

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE BALLOTING. A constitutional amendment to allow No Excuse Absentee balloting will be on the 2024 ballot.

CT VOTER RIGHTS ACT. The Secretary of State's office is doing a bill analysis now and will send out information to Registrar's when it is complete.

EARLY VOTING. Secretary Thomas shared the highlights of the bill.

Early Voting takes effect January 1, 2024

It applies to General Elections (14 days), Primaries (7 days), Special Elections and Presidential Primaries (4 days). It does not apply to referenda.

Hours of Early Voting are 10 a.m – 6:00 p.m. except the last Tuesday and Thursday the week before the election where the hours on those days is 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. This is a statutory requirement.

There will be \$10,500 available to each town to help fund Early Voting. It will be administered by the Secretary of State's office.

Same Day Registration will occur during Early Voting. This replaces Election Day Registration.

SOTS will be sending out a memo summarizing the final Early Voting bill with recommendations on how to comply with it.

LEGISLATURE

Secretary of State Thomas expressed her concern about legislators understanding of the election process and expenses needed to establish Early Voting. She said a mid-year budget adjustment would be needed and asked for ROVAC's assistance.

There is a need to fund poll worker recruitment, training and public education for Early Voting. These items did not receive any support in the last budget cycle.

Secretary of State Thomas asked Registrars to talk to their legislators before the next session and share the need for funding of election expenses and activities. She also asked Registrars to reach out to members of the State Bond Commission to express their support for SOTS request for new Election Tabulators. And, request it be put on an upcoming agenda.

TECHNOLOGY

Secretary of State Thomas provided an update on several technology items.

CVRS - The new CVRS software is scheduled to roll out in June of 2024. There will be a new module added to the current CVRS by the end of January that handles Early Voting.

POLL BOOKS: The UConn Voter Center has not reviewed the available Poll Books since 2019. There is a plan to do a new review in the current scope of work. The Secretary anticipates that if they do not come up with a specific recommendation that there will be guidelines and specifications for Registrars to follow in making decisions about whether and which Poll Books to use.

TABULATORS: The Bonding Committee in the legislature has agreed new tabulators need to be funded. There is one more step. It requires the approval of the State Bonding Commission. The new specifications are ready to go however they cannot be released until the Commission approves funding. There is some doubt that new machines will be in place for November 2024.

GENERAL

Secretary of State Thomas indicated that the office would be sending out a survey to all Registrars early this summer. She is looking to gather a variety of data around Early Voting. No date was given for the survey release.

Secretary of State Thomas left the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

COUNTY BUSINESS

Chairman Russell continued the meeting. She asked members about whether they received stipends or salaries. The group was a mix of both. She encouraged members who were concerned about their salary/stipend to view the request for a change in salary/stipend as an 'adjustment' needed to handle an expansion in job responsibilities and time needed to perform same.

Members expressed a concern about recruiting enough help. Several members shared what the pay rate was for poll workers and whether food was purchased for them on election day. Some members indicated that they may be leaving their post before next November.

Chairman Russell queried members present about the possibility of establishing county dues. She indicated it could be used to cover county organizational and conference expenses (ie. putting together the county raffle basket). She thought it could be a nominal membership fee that would be assessed at the beginning of each fiscal year (7/1). No decision was made at this meeting.

Chairman Russell then asked if anyone was willing to assume the Chairmanship as she needed to step down from this role. She wished to remain on the ROVAC Legislative and Education Committees.

Lisa Amatruda, Woodbury Republican Registrar, offered to assume the responsibility of the Chairmanship. No one else expressed an interest. She assumed the Chairmanship by acclimation of those present at the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Putnam, Secretary

ROVAC – Calendar of Activities

JULY	
1	ROVAC – Registration begins for Fall conference.
1	ROVAC – Annual Membership/Renewal begins
18-25	PARTY CAUCUSES – MUNICIPAL
TBD	Survey from SOTS for ROV's
AUGUST	
18	ROVAC Conference - Hotel Reservation Deadline
SEPTEMBER	
7	ROVAC Conference – Last Day to Register for the Conference
12	MUNICIPAL PRIMARY (if needed)
19 & 20	ROVAC CONFERENCE – Windsor Marriott in Windsor, CT
OCTOBER	
NOVEMBER	
7	MUNICIPAL ELECTION
DECEMBER	
JANUARY	
2 thru April 30	ANNUAL VOTER CANVASS BEGINS
TBD	New Early Voting module for CVRS to be introduced
FEBRUARY	
MARCH	
APRIL	
TBD	ROVAC CONFERENCE – Bristol Event Center
25-28 (best guess)	EARLY VOTING – PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY
30	PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY
MAY	
JUNE	
TBD	New CVRS/EMS system this month