

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
OF THE TOMPKINS COUNTY PROGRESSIVES
FEBRUARY 5, 2017**

In Attendance: Emily Adams
 Susan Beckley
 Susan Boutros
 Jason Cortell
 Caitlyn Darfler (by telephone)
 Deborah Dawson
 Margaret Fisher
 Ronny Hardaway
 Kris Hodges
 Anna Kelles (by telephone)
 Kim Knight
 Mark Messing
 Katy Nicholson
 Bill Podulka
 Sandy Podulka

Co-chairs Emily Adams and Kim Knight called the meeting to order at 3:13 pm.

Admin Committee: Jason Cortell reported that TCP has \$800 to its credit in NYPAN's checking account, and another \$500 in petty cash. We now have over 25 dues-paying members. Knight reported that she has sent responses to 17 individuals who have expressed an interest on our website in becoming members.

Knight also reported that she has set up a process for people to become members, pay dues, and connect with issues committees of their choice through the website. She has also created a gmail account for TCP, and is thinking of creating separate email addresses so that each of the issues committee chairs can be contacted directly – an idea which everyone endorsed.

Kris Hodges reported that the Admin Committee is developing a privacy policy and will be sending that out to the Board members for review as soon as it is completed.

Ronny Hardaway suggested putting a button on the website that would allow members to submit suggestions for agenda items that would be forwarded via email directly to the Secretary – another idea which everyone endorsed.

Adams reported that the Durland Library “meet and greet” event was quite successful. At least 30 prospective members attended, including some people of color, as well as an individual who expressed an interest in forming a committee to deal with immigration issues. Adams and Cortell said that themes emerged from people’s comments, including the need to coordinate the activities of the many groups in our area, the desire for specific tasks for would-be activists to undertake, and concern that someone should be vetting the information and activities that are publicized by various groups. Margaret Fisher raised the recurring issue of a good calendar, and asked if anyone had considered using “Action Network” for the purpose. Adams indicated that NYPAN was looking into using Action Network website; if NYPAN signs up to use it, then TCP can use it as well.

Adams reported that she had asked John Hertzler (Caroline Democratic Committee) if he would be willing to help TCP with a workshop on messaging (“numbers numb, stories sell”), and he said he would. This would definitely be a good project for our group to sponsor.

DemEnter Committee: Since Ted and Martha Laux were not at the meeting, Deborah Dawson reported that five TCP Executive Board Members (Adams, Dawson, Hardaway, Kelles, and Nicholson) were seated on the Tompkins County Democratic Committee on January 26, and several of us had spoken at the TCDC “listening event” on January 28.

Economic Justice/Labor: Dawson reported that Joe Lawrence had sent out an email “blast” asking 125 people to call their Senators on February 1 in opposition to Puzder’s nomination as Labor Secretary. Lawrence also met with new member Ernesto Archila, who he found to be very informed, energetic, and helpful. Finally, Lawrence will be meeting with the Tompkins-Cortland Labor Committee, a political action group, on February 7.

Dawson reported that she and Katy Nicholson had organized an ACA Learn-In with the TCDC on January 15. The event was very well attended and sufficiently successful that we were asked to repeat it on February 2 in Owego, where it was also successful. Looming issues for the committee’s attention include Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, and the administration’s roll-back of the “fiduciary rule” and regulations under Dodd-Frank.

Election Justice: Hardaway reported that, while waiting for committee members to materialize, he has been collecting topical online resources for the website. He also joined the Take Back Elections FaceBook group, where he is advocating for using new technologies to secure online voting and auditing of election results. Finally, Hardaway outlined a surprisingly large number of stages in the election process at which fair elections can be derailed.

Environmental Justice: Susan Boutros brought two items to the Board for action. First, she has been working with Walter Hang and his group to coordinate opposition to the proposed

expansion of the Borger Natural Gas Compressor Station in Ellis Hollow. She will forward the “game plan” to the TCP listserves as soon as it is published on Hang’s website late on February 5. Second, Boutros urged TCP members to take their deposits out of big banks and move them to local credit unions, as an expression of our opposition to banks’ investments in the DAPL and other fossil fuel projects, and in the development of private prisons. She would like us to consider expanding this into a boycott and divest initiative. Dawson asked Adams to discuss this idea with Arthur Schwartz and the NYPAN Board, just to make sure that we don’t do anything that might expose TCP or NYPAN to liability for tortious interference with contracts or some similar legal theory.

Boutros pointed out that many of the issues that we must address do not fit into single categories: there is a sort of neural network of issues that cross the artificial lines suggested by our committee structure. She urged that our committees should work on issues together; everyone agreed. She also reminded us that there’s plenty of work for many hands to do.

Cait Darfler reported by telephone that she monitors approximately 50 online sources to cull relevant local environmental action items that she pushes out on a listserve to members of COW’s environment action committee and her own Tompkins County Environment Protectors group. We would like her to start including our TCP members in this effort, and the Admin Committee will figure out how best to accomplish that. Meanwhile, Darfler will send her information to Boutros, and Boutros will forward it to our listserve.

Healthcare Committee: Margaret Fisher reported that she has been working with Susan Beckley and her NY Single Payer group, *e.g.*, on organizing people to participate in a Call-In action on January 27. Beckley updated the status of the NY Single Payer legislation, which has passed the NYS Assembly for the past two years, only to die by inaction in the State Senate. There is a new single payer bill this year; assuming the Assembly passes it again, it still faces an uphill battle in the Senate, where it lacks 8 Senators to get out of Committee. Beckley’s group has been told that the Senate does not intend to move the bill this year. Beckley and her group want NYPAN’s help to put pressure on Senators around the State. Fisher urged the Board to check out the NYHCampaign.org website for more information.

Fisher stated that a majority of New Yorkers polled support universal health care. That majority necessarily encompasses people from across the political spectrum, and gives TCP and NYPAN an opportunity to reach out to folks outside of the Ithaca “bubble.”

Dawson and Beckley attended a Legislative Roundtable event in Corning on February 3, where a representative from Tom Reed’s office made it clear that New York’s Congressional Caucus has no viable plan for making up the loss of Federal Medicaid reimbursement to New York’s county governments if the ACA is repealed. This could create a major fiscal crisis for most Upstate

counties, where Medicaid costs take up significant (26% in Tompkins County) to astronomical (over 100% in Schoharie County) percentages of county property tax revenues. Marc Messing urged the Board - and NYPAN chapters across the State - to use this issue to make Republican Congressmen from New York feel as uncomfortable as possible. Hodges suggested that we should tell them that the Medicaid reimbursement problem dictates a vote against repealing the ACA.

Political Action Committee: Katy Nicholson reported that she developed Indivisible23 to create a coordinated district-wide action network that will complement TCP's efforts here in our own county. Indivisible23's primary focus is applying pressure on Tom Reed. It will also be focusing on messaging for the more conservative parts of the NY23rd.

Nicholson will be working with Leslie Danks Burke's PAC to support progressive candidates in local elections throughout our Congressional district. She is considering whether TCP should endorse local candidates (which our Bylaws permit us to do). She is also trying to figure out where and how to plug in new TCP members who want to take direct political action.

Anna Kelles reported by telephone on the ACA and Sanctuary City resolutions that will be presented to the County Legislature this month. Of course, the ACA resolution will pass, but without support from Republican legislators. Democrat Dooley Kiefer may not support it, either, because she doesn't think it takes a strong enough position in favor of single payer. Kelles would like to have the ACA resolution pass by a supermajority, even if the vote does break on straight party lines.

Kelles reported that the Sanctuary City resolution faces bigger problems. Many legislators are concerned about the financial consequences to the County if the resolution passes. Kelles is researching this issue with assistance from members of Cornell's law school faculty. It will be addressed in Kelles Health and Human Services Committee, and in an op ed piece that Kelles is writing.

Kelles also urged TCP to work on identifying potential candidates for legislative positions, since several Democratic legislators are considering stepping down when their terms end this year.

Political Literacy: Hodges reported that she would like to present learning events based on "Listen, Liberal" and the messaging and framing issues raised by George Lakoff and other authors working at the intersection of linguistics, cognitive science, and politics. She is participating in SURJ's rural listening initiative. Because we must be concerned with how best to communicate with people outside our bubble, Hodges will be meeting with Leslie Danks Burke to glean her insights into bridging the cultural gap between Ithaca and the rest of the NY 23rd.

Cortell suggested that we consider presenting a learning event based on “Killing the Host.” He also pointed out that many younger people are ignorant about the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings and their aftermath, and that we should consider presenting those facts as part of an anti-war program.

Hodges mentioned that she had attended the People’s School event at Cornell, and handed out TCP flyers. She also reported that 3 new members had signed up at the “meet and greet” event.

Social Justice Committee: Knight said that she is the entire committee at the moment, so her activity has been limited to her participation in SURJ, and her research into other local groups with whom she can work. She expects that the committee’s direction will be determined to some extent on the interests and concerns of the people who join. Meanwhile, Knight will be looking at the immigration issue, specifically at the materials that Susan Boutros collected at the ICOS open house on February 4. She will also consider participating in Boutros’ boycott and divest initiative.

Changes in Board Membership: Last week, Susan Sarabasha advised the Board by email that she was “quitting” TCP. Adams attempted to discuss this with her via email, but received no response. Knight indicated that Sarabasha had been given ample opportunity to discuss and retract her resignation, and that the Board must accept it.

The Board voted unanimously to elect Darfler to the Board, where she will serve with Boutros as a co-chair of the Environmental Justice Committee.

Reconfiguration of Issues Committee Structure: The Board decided that:

- The Admin Committee, consisting of Adams, Cortell, Hardaway, Hodges, and Knight, will not have a chair.
- Adams will chair a newly created Community Outreach Committee.
- Cortell will chair a newly created International Relations and Peace Committee.

Future Public Events: TCP will host a public “open house” event on March 18th from 4:00-6:00 pm. Hodges will reserve the auditorium at Annabel Taylor Hall for this event. An *ad hoc* committee, consisting of Adams, Dawson, Hodges, and Knight, will plan the event.

Adams reported that she met Greenstar’s manager, Pam Wooster, at the meet and greet event. Wooster is new to activism, and apparently volunteered to host a series of learning events for activists at Greenstar. Adams asked if we would like to help Wooster out with planning and presentation of these events, and the Board agreed. The first one will be on February 15, from 5:00-7:00 pm.

The next meeting of the Executive Board will be on Thursday, March 2, at 7:00 pm at 55 Banks Road in Brooktondale.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:18 pm, to go into Executive Session.