**RRTA Meeting (Virtual on Zoom)**

**March 4, 2021**

**Attendance:**  Z. Artson-Crichlow, M. Barnum, C. Bonsignore-Kitchen, P. Brody, B. Buckingham, C. Dean, L. Espinosa, K. Evans, K. Fager, S. Flynn, B. Gerace, W. Humphrey, M. Jenkins-Cox, A. Johnson, F. Macek, L. Rapkin, E. Robinson, K. Schultz, G. Shakes, A. Smith, C. Smith, B. Swan, F. Valente, Y. Wooten, M. Zimmer, J. Zuniga

**Absent:** R. Allen,D. Altobelli, K. Barkley, M. Ferenchak, K. Huey, M. Keating, S. Silvio, D. Sullivan, D. Voellinger

**Also in attendance**: J. Robillard, M. Lavonis (RTA Secretary/zoom administrator)

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:05.

2. A moment of silence was observed for teachers who have passed away in the past month: Timothy Behnke, Clayton Bush, Marybeth Duffy-Hasenauer, Peter Gueli, Joseph Harte, Noel Michaloski, Carol Musso, Mary Sculley, Bonnie Rooksby. A $25 donation is made to Books for Kids in memory of any RRTA member.

3. The February RRTA minutes were approved as written.

4. **Covid Vaccine** — Charlie Dean said that you must be persistent in calling to get your appointment. You can keep calling (833-697-4829) to make an earlier appointment as others cancel. The NYS site at Kodak Hawkeye building has been opened to the whole county now. Syracuse’s Fairgrounds site is now open 24/7. They give the Pfizer in the morning and when they run out they move to the J&J for the overnight vaccinations. RRH are still calling their members randomly. Lifespan (244-8400) are helping seniors to get appointments and some of the YMCA’s are also helping. You can also get appointments by calling pharmacies in the area. You just need to be persistent.

5. **Dress A Girl/Savvy Sewers** — Gaya Shakes said they collected an SUV full of cleaning supplies that they delivered in February to Beyond the Sanctuary. She said that they are considering another activity for May. Lucia Espinosa asked her that the group consider donating cleaning supplies to Bethany House (for abused women and those out of jail) and Eastern Service Workers. Gaya said she would bring the request to the committee.

6. **Officer Election** — Mary Barnum proposed that Charlie Dean and Gaya Shakes speak to the chair of the N&E Committee as they did at the last online election so that RRTA members who do not have an email address get the ballot in traditional mail (about 73 members). Per diems may have the same problem and Charlie Dean said he would bring up the issue at the next general assembly of the RTA. He said he would make a motion to be inclusive of all departments.

7. Mary Barnum reported that there are **434 RRTA dues payers**. Last week the office sent out 366 letters to the people who were members last year but have yet to send their dues. Last year there were 761 members. The number of RRTA reps is based on membership and there might be a loss of 10 reps with such low numbers. The newspaper that should arrive before April 1 will have the dues payer list. If you do not see your name on the list, but you have sent in your money, please contact Mary Barnum. There have been problems with the US mail of being late or not arriving. If you don’t see your name on the list, and haven’t sent in your dues money, hopefully you will send in your check to be counted and show the union that retirees have a voice in decisions.

8. **Elders and Allies Group** for all community members — Barry Swan said that there is a group that organized as a result of last summer’s Black Lives Matter demonstrations. Some people were not comfortable about going out in crowds due to Covid but were interested in becoming involved. He explained many of their activities: going on a weekend for one hour to a street corner with signs to make passers-by realize it is still an issue (some religious groups from all denominations are involved); Tuesdays there is a zoom discussion and an email list serve to share information and inspirational hope; Mondays at noon there is a meditation group in a park near where Daniel Prude was arrested; there are groups involved at Clara Barton School and with getting Daniel’s Law passed, etc. If you would like more information, you can contact Barry at [baswan@aol.com](mailto:baswan@aol.com) or organizer James Thompson at [jimbojimbolaya@gmail.com](mailto:jimbojimbolaya@gmail.com). Barry will write an article about the group for the June RRTA newspaper.

9. **Vote Cope** — Mary Barnum will be preparing a list of Vote Cope Contributors for the summer newspaper. There will be a form for contributing or increasing your contribution in the April 1 newspaper. There was a question about Vote Cope contributions sent in to the RTA office. Mary Barnum said that the contribution is logged in the RTA office and the check is forwarded to the Vote Cope office in Albany.

10. **Newspaper** — The next issue’s date has not been set (but probably in June). There is an issue at the printer and should be received at your house before April 1.

11. **Calendar** — Linda Rapkin said she called Hurd’s Orchard for the annual luncheon trip. They are planning to open up and Linda is hoping to make a reservation for late October.

12. **Books for Kids** — Even though the group has not been meeting, if you would like to make a donation, you can send a contribution for when they begin visiting first grade classrooms again to donate books to students. The check should be made out to BFK/FLACE. If your contribution is $50 or over, you will receive an acknowledgement from the bank, but if it is less, the committee will send an acknowledgement mentioning the amount donated for your records.

13.  **Labor Council** — Freddi Macek said that the annual Workers’ Memorial Day to honor those who died or were injured on the job and for workers’ safety will be celebrated on April 28 in Highland Park at between 4 and 5 pm. Because it is an outdoor venue, it will be held as in the past.

Freddi also said that the Labor Council is interviewing both mayoral candidates and should be coming out with a recommendation.

She spoke about Postmaster General, Louis DeJoy, and his plan to dismantle the Post Office. Also workers at Amazon in another state are voting to join a union.

14. **Mayoral election** — Kevin Fager said that Malik Evans needs to have 600 signatures to be added to the Democratic ticket for the June primaries by March 16. He has petitions as does Jim Kraus, whom you can contact to sign the petitions as long as you are a city resident. Zelda Artson Crichlow said that in her Harvard St. neighborhood area they are also having times and a place where neighbors can come and sign petitions for various positions for the primary ballot.

Barry Swan said that the RTA Political Committee has interviewed both mayoral candidates and will be analyzing the responses and sending their decision to Executive Council.

15. Lucia Espinosa wanted to recommend a documentary film, **Crip Camp**, on Netflix. She said that it is an excellent film about how disabled people in the 1970s that changed US policy on handicapped people.

16. Mary Barnum asked Charlie Dean to ask Adam Urbanski to attend the next RRTA rep meeting to discuss the issues behind reopening of schools, vaccinating teachers and the lack of consistency of information.

A NYSUT recommended **industrial hygienist** has been in the buildings prior to each reopening stage to evaluate buildings. Also he has been brought back to check on whether the work is completed to his satisfaction. There were questions about inside rooms and/or rooms without windows. Matt Lavonis was able to answer many questions saying that the industrial hygienist monitors the air and air flow in such situations and the district has closed down those rooms where the air is not acceptable. There was a question about what will happen when schools go full time and those rooms will be needed again. This must be monitored.

The district would have reopened in September, 2020, had it not been for the RTA union saying that buildings were not safe and for bringing in an independent industrial hygienist to evaluate the safety. The RCSD was barely prepared with Stage 1 reopening in January, 2021.

There was a question about how often the Merv 13 filters need to be changed and who will see to it that the work is done. Matt said that they come with a dial (1 - 10 with 10 being the highest safety level). Because the filters are so new this hasn’t been answered by RCSD but the union is on top of the issue.

Cleaning staff were laid off with the lunchroom staff and not all have been rehired or replaced. Because it is a different union the RTA doesn’t know all the facts according to Matt Lavonis, but he said that teachers are reporting that they feel the buildings are not getting the needed deep cleaning. He also said that it often depends on the building administrator of what gets done.

CO is not responding to safety of their own building on Broad Street and the industrial hygienist did not go into that building, though asked by the RTA. The staff at CO have recently started returning intermittently.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 8, 2021.

Mary Zimmer,

RRTA Secretary