**RRTA Meeting (Virtual on Zoom)**

**May 6, 2021**

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

**Absent:** D. Altobelli, K. Barkley, M. Ferenchak, A. Johnson, D. Sullivan, F. Valente, J. Zuniga

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:03.

2. A moment of silence was observed for teachers who have passed away in the past month: Carol Despos. A $25 donation is made to Books for Kids in memory of any RRTA member.

3. The April RRTA minutes were approved as written.

4. **Blue Cross/Blue Shield Settlement** — Many RTA members have received notification of a lawsuit and that the Rochester area would be getting about $50,000. When researched, Carrie Andrews from the NYSUT office, responded that NYSUT is not involved, but that the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association had a lawsuit filed against it for various antitrust violations between 2008 and 2020. It is presently in the “Class Notice” stage. If a member received notice and is interested in pursuing a claim, the email notification includes the steps they should follow. JND Legal Administration is managing the class settlement for the plaintiffs’ council. They have created a website with information and a robust Q&A section at [www.BCBSsettlement.com](http://www.BCBSsettlement.com).

5. **Dress A Girl/Savvy Sewers** — Gaya Shakes said they are continuing with their blanket making for their December, 2021 campaign. They are looking at obtaining grants to raise funds. They are accepting donations sent to RTA. (Make the checks out to RTA but put Dress a Girl on the message line.)

6. **Labor Council** — Phone banks are being organized for Malik Evans. May 20 there will be a fundraiser for Malik at 5:30 at the Round House Pavilion in Genesee Valley Park with Harry Bronson and Demond Meeks sponsoring the reception. There is a suggested donation of $30.

City Council endorsements are for Victor Sanchez, Luis Aponte, and Alex White.

Labor Council will endorse the RTA’s endorsements for School Board.

Labor Council is having their annual meeting on May 29, in person, in Corning, NY. They will be having someone from Harry Bronson’s office speak on STAR and the new property tax credit. It is important to look at the new changes. Mary Barnum has information that she will forward to all RRTA members.

7. **Vote Cope** — Mary Barnum said there was a Vote Cope appeal in the last newspaper and she received 19 responses. She received 12 checks (including one for $500 and one for $1000), 4 pension deduction increases and 1 new pension deduction. The August newspaper will have the list of contributors.

At the NYSUT Convention, Rochester Teachers Association was the 10th highest (of 200 districts) of Vote Cope contributors.

Mary Barnum wants to acknowledge retirees contributors though Dave Altobelli, the Vote Cope chair, isn’t sending out thank you gifts this year to active teachers during the campaign. She will be looking into this. Anyone whose donation is $60 or more during the 20-21 school year will have their name included in the annual restaurant raffle.

8. **Books for Kids** — They continue to be inactive but are anxious to get back into schools and give first graders books. They are taking donations sent to RTA (checks made out to FLACE/Books for Kids, a tax deductible contribution.)

9. **Calendar** — Linda Rapkin said that Hurd’s Luncheons are only being scheduled month by month and because she is hoping to schedule one in October, she will have to wait until they expand their calendar.

It was decided to postpone the RRTA fall picnic until Spring, 2022.

June 3 will be the next RRTA meeting.

10. **Membership** — After the newspaper membership list and the letter reminding people to send in their dues there are 710 RRTA members. RRTA is entitled to have 35 representatives. Present Reps with expiring terms are: Bob Allen, Katherine Barkley, Carol Bonsignore-Kitchen, Marie Jenkins-Cox, Kevin Fager, Robert Gerace, Willie Humphrey, Alex Johnson, Freddi Macek, Ellen Robinson, Ken Schultz, Gaya Shakes, Sharon Silvio, Cathy Smith, Deb Sullivan, Diane Voellinger, Mary Zimmer, and Joe Zuniga.

There will be a call for nominations in the next issue of the RRTA newspaper.

Ken Schultz proposed a motion that everyone present at the meeting be nominated for RRTA rep. The motion passed.

Ken also thanked Mary Barnum for all the work she did in bringing up the RRTA membership number by over 200 in a month.

11. **Newspaper** — Mary Barnum said she would be conferring with Bill Gerber this week to finalize the next RRTA newspaper. It will have the up to date membership list, minutes from the March, February, and April, Gen 2 volunteer information, and a Barry Swan article. Because of Covid, the newspapers are in a shrunken and limited format so some articles may be in the following issues.

12. **Memorial Art Gallery** — Patti Brody shared that there is a new exhibit she recommends — “613” which are Dick Tracy type cartoon designs interpreting the 613 commandments from the Old Testament.

13. **“Eyes of Our Ancestors” at East High School** — Gaya Shakes shared that there is an exhibit in the East High courtyard by students and Shawn Dunwoody that is worth seeing. She said students aren’t in on Monday and Tuesdays and you can call to enter exit #1 (same entrance for basketball games).

14. NYSUT “at home” virtual visits continue with PAC. Sharon Silvio reported that and that people continue to ask about early retirement incentives. Nothing has passed but the legislature is still looking into it.

15.  **June 22 is the primary election.** It is crucial for RTA because the candidates running for the Board such as Joe Klein are anti teacher and benefits. If they get control retirees could lose health benefits from the district.

RTA is backing Malik Evans for mayor and 40 retirees volunteered to send postcard messages to the 1,900 NYSUT city dwellers for Malik but they are having difficulty in getting the cards. They are promised soon.

Absentee ballots can be gotten with the pandemic as a temporary illness (like last year). You must get the application by calling the Board of Elections at 753-1550 or on line. The absentee ballot must be received by June 15. **Please Vote**.

16. Charlie Dean said he had gone into the RTA office to send a mailing of campaign literature because per diem subs don’t have mailboxes in the schools.

The meeting adjourned at 11:08.

Mary Zimmer,

RRTA Secretary