**RRTA Meeting**

**January 9, 2020**

**Attendance:**  R. Allen, Z. Artson-Crichlow, M. Barnum, C. Bonsignore-Kitchen, P. Brody, C. Dean, K. Evans, K. Fager, M. Ferenchak, B. Gerace,K. Huey, W. Humphrey, M. Jenkins-Cox, B. Jones, L. Rapkin, K. Schultz, G. Shakes, S. Silvio, A. Smith, C. Smith, D. Sullivan, B. Swan, F. Valente, Y. Wooten, M. Zimmer

**Absent:** D. Altobelli, K. Barkley, B. Buckingham,A. Johnson, M. Keating, F. Macek, E. Robinson, D. Voellinger, J. Zuniga

**Also in attendance**: R. Boyd, L. Espinosa

The meeting was called to order at 10:07.

1. A moment of silence was observed for teachers who have passed away in past months: Charles Tuttle, Elizabeth C. Walz, Grace Williamson, Clint Strickland. A $25 donation is made to Books for Kids in memory of any RRTA member.

2. The December RRTA minutes were approved as written.

3. **Holiday Party** — The RRTA reps thanked Karen Huey and her committee for all their work to prepare the Holiday Party. She said that there were 110 who attended. It was a great fund raiser for Dress a Girl and for the food cupboard. The person who was taken out by ambulance survived and was released a few days after from the hospital.

4. **Niagara on the Lake/Shaw Festival** — Bob Gerace is helping Cathy Fager and said that they have the dates: May 19 is Gypsy and September 24 is Sherlock. Bob said that they don’t have specific prices yet but all will be in the January/February RRTA newspaper.

5.  **Rally for Rochester Schools** — Adam Urbanski came in to discuss what is happening with RCSD. He said that DiNapoli is in the process of a NYS audit which will take 2 months before reporting. SEC’s investigation is looking for fraud (not pocketing the money but mismanagement and willfully misrepresenting the budget). CO is now claiming a near $70 million deficit and continuing to rise. The immediate issue is to keep the district solvent until June. If the state doesn’t help with the spin up money they may not meet payroll by May. The union (RTA, NYSUT, and AFT) are helping to get the state funding. Harry Bronson has been instrumental in helping on the legislative side. The spin up money to be borrowed is up to $25 million.

Tuesday, January 14, NYSUT is providing a bus or 2 for lobbying in Albany exclusively for Rochester. They are asking retirees to help out by going with parents and students. The bus would be leaving at 6:30 am and breakfast will be handed out for the bus. Then you will arrive in time for a business lunch where what to say to legislators would be shared. The group would leave Albany for Rochester at 3 pm.

If there is no more spin up money Urbanksi said that there may be more layoffs in a month. Anything not mandated by the state might go.

NYSUT’s president, Andy Palotta, AFT president, Randy Weingarten, Chancellor Rosa, and the governor’s office spoke to the Superintendent to hold off layoffs in December until the legislature reconvened in January. The Superintendent stubbornly refused. He then sent a “super star” letter to the laid off teachers on expensive stationary which was seen as insensitive. He also refuses any CO cuts. Only one person’s position was eliminated. All other administrators were found jobs using grant money. Urbanski reported that there were to be 168 teachers laid off which was reduced to 93 . There were some resignations and earlier than June retirements.

There was a question about not meeting payroll. Are benefits effected? Urbanski said that he doesn’t know but will be getting help from NYSUT and AFT and would probably take the district to court.

Urbanski said that there is a splinter group complaining about the RTA, Rochester Organization of Rank and File Educators. They are organizing on Facebook, blocking any RTA officer, attacking the union and are mimicking the school board. They are trying to get a representative at every school to undermine the union within the building. They say that the RTA leadership is too old and ineffective and calling for a strike. It is not the time to undermine the union and divide the teachers. Principals are jumping on their bandwagon saying that the union is not representing the teachers. Teachers need to show unity with the RTA to fight CO.

Please wear the Solidarity pins to show support for RTA. Retirees can be supportive by doing this to show new teachers.

RTA has given no concessions (as requested by the 60% of surveys returned). The Superintendent continues to ask for salary rollbacks but says that if it is done he still doesn’t guarantee teachers won’t be laid off and he still refuses to reduce CO personnel. Urbanski thinks he is trying to make a name for himself by breaking the RTA so that he can advance his resumé (a la Brizzard in 2008).

Urbanski said all teachers are union members and he represents everyone, including the Facebook group and he has agreed to meet with them to discuss their issues. Information and communication bring out into the sunlight for unity and solidarity. Negative comments only cause more problems.

When an urban school can’t make a payroll, it goes to the city for a loan. The problem is Mayor Warren would like to see this happen for mayoral control. RTA recently found out that the city could refuse to give a loan but causes the city to reduce their bond rating. Urbanski said the governor may attach strings to the spin up money also calling for mayoral control or to eliminate the school board.

January 1 the new school board members were seated.

Recent retirees should get their incentive first payment of $10,000 minus taxes, on January 31. If you have had direct deposit with the district, that will be how you shall receive it.

6. **Dress a Girl/Savvy Sewers** — The fund raiser at the Holiday luncheon raised about $890. They are about to send a large shipment to the Bahamas church. They have a large stock of dresses, so anyone traveling to a country that could use dresses for needy children, contact someone from the committee. Gaya Shakes said that they made and gave blankets to the homeless. The group resumes on January 27 and all are welcome.

7. **Newspaper**  — The deadline is January 21 to get all articles and pictures to Mary Barnum. The paper will only go to dues paying members. It will include a list of dues payers (745). Mary Barnum said she would like to send a Solidarity pin to all members to show union support. The January/February newspaper will be sent out at the end of February this year.

8. **Books for Kids** — January we are going to Montessori; January 24 at 10 to buy the books at Barnes and Noble and to deliver the books on January 27 at 12:15. There is about $8000 in the account.

9. **Calendar** — January 21 after the RTA rep meeting will be the Martin Luther King Assembly to honor a student from each building. April 28 is the Democratic Presidential Primary in New York State.

10. **NYSUT/AFT/NEA Delegate Election** — Bernadette Ferrara, RTA office manager, sent out an email explaining the dates and process of the election done on line for the first time. On January 16, those requesting a paper ballot will be prepared and mailed.

11. Mary Jo Whalen, a friend of RRTA and Books for Kids, is very ill and a card was sent around to sign and forward to her.

12. Kevin Fager reported that the **Democratic Committee is meeting to endorse Harry Bronson** and promoting his election. He has supported the RTA and issues with RCSD in Albany for years.

13. Toys for Tots on December 18 — Ron Boyd reported that many RRTA members went to School 22 to load and pass out the 1500 toys to the children.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:33.

Mary Zimmer

RRTA Secretary