**RRTA Meeting (Virtual on Zoom)**

**February 3, 2022**

**Attendance:**  R. Allen, Z. Artson-Crichlow, P. Brody, B. Buckingham, C. Dean, L. Espinosa, K. Evans, K. Fager, M. Ferenchak, S. Flynn, B. Gerace, K. Huey, W. Humphrey, M. Keating

F. Macek, L. Rapkin, E. Robinson, K. Schultz, G. Shakes, A. Smith, C. Smith, D. Sullivan, B. Swan, Y. Wooten, M. Zimmer

**Absent:** D. Altobelli, K. Barkley, M. Barnum, C. Bonsignore-Kitchen, M. Jenkins-Cox, A. Johnson, S. Silvio, F. Valente, D. Voellinger, J. Zuniga

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:05. The meeting was recorded for an absent rep who requested this.

2. A moment of silence was observed for teachers who have passed away in the past month: Suzanne Arnold, Virginia Cahill, Shondra Cunningham, Anne Viggiani, and Hilton Williams A $25 donation is made to Books for Kids in memory of any RRTA member.

3. The January RRTA minutes were approved as written.

4. **Dress a Girl/Savvy Sewers** — Gaya Shakes said she spoke to Sandra Martinez and their next project will be making blankets for those in foster care. She said that someone they know will be going to the Congo and will ask if they would like to take dresses. They continue to meet at St. Bernards and all are welcome to join the group.

5. **Labor Council** — Freddi Macek said that the Council held their January elections for trustees and committees. Freddi is a Director at Large for the AFL-CIO Labor Council and is the Retiree Chair.

The Labor Council has made early endorsement for higher positions in NYS: Kathy Hochul, governor; Leticia James, attorney general, and Tom Napoli, comptroller. She will continue to let us know of other positions they endorse.

6. **Vote Cope** — There was no report.

7.  **Newspaper** — Mary Barnum was absent so there was no report, but RRTA members received their January/February newspaper recently.

8. **Books for Kids** — The committee is unable to go into schools but have $10,675 in a bank account which included $467 that had been deposited in the last quarter. Please remember the group as a contribution in memory of those who pass away.

For any RRTA member who passes away a $25 donation is given from the general account to Books for Kids in their name.

Lucia Espinosa asked about Spanish books for the first graders in bilingual schools. Linda Rapkin explained that the group gets a discount at Barnes and Noble and the books are tax free. The homeroom teacher will recommend book levels and topics for the committee to buy. Lucia said that she will contact the committee and it was suggested she get the tax-free number if she wants to buy Spanish books for the bilingual children.

9. Al Smith thanked Lucia Espinosa for helping as a translator for a family that the Lyons Club was helping. He also thanked her for helping with Toys for Tots.

10. **New York Health Care Act** — Ken Schultz said that people should look into this because it could negatively affect union members. The Act could increase premiums to $12,000 per year ($1000 per month). It would cover everyone in the state for health care but may severely impact union members who have an agreement already for health care benefits. Charlie Dean said that it is to be paid for by payroll taxes and non-payroll taxes including money taken out of IRAs and annuities. Barry Swan said that it should be a nationwide plan because companies and wealthy people in NYS will move out of the state and the burden of the plan will be on the middle class. Information needs to be well explained rather than vote now and work it out later.

Freddi Macek said that the discussion at the Labor Council has been against the plan. NYSUT needs to come out with information and endorse or not endorse it.

Link: **https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\_reports/RR2400/RR2424/RAND\_RR2424.pdf**

There will be more discussion at the RTA meeting.

11. Ellen Robinson thanked Charlie Dean and Mary Barnum for forwarding the webinar link with NYS Rep Tonko who spoke about what is happening in NYS Legislature. She suggested that the local legislators offer the same meeting. Charlie Deans said that NYSUT shares these webinar links monthly and he will be forwarding them to reps in the future.

12. Al Smith spoke of a 1943 Remembrance mass at St. Mary’s and at White Haven for the 4 chaplains who gave up their life jackets to other soldiers as a ship was sinking.

13. **Recording RRTA meetings** — a rep had requested that this and the next two meetings be recorded because he is unable to attend. The group is going to consider posting the meeting for everyone and will be put on the next agenda for March. Videos can be edited if there is a topic that shouldn’t be shared.

Meeting adjourned at 11:03.

The next meeting will be March 3, 2022.

Mary Zimmer

RRTA Secretary