

# Executive Board Minutes

## Thursday, Feb. 10, 2011

**Present: Officers:** N. Lefkowitz, G. Lockett, J. Rosenberg, J. Oricchio, W. Pinkett

**Director:** M. Brodsky

**Exec. Bd. Members:** E. Clay, M. Goodman, F. Klein, J. Oricchio, C. Testa, P. DeMeo, R. Jones, M. Korman, M. Williams, M. W. Covington, E. Lockett, V. Navarro, J. M. Marsh

**CSA Special VP-Retirees:** Irwin Shanes

**Regional Unit Leaders:** L. Sterman, R. Jones, D. Juliano (for Al Nilsen)

**Alternates:** S. Porter, S. Stern, P. W. McNabb, R. Shulman

**Guests:** Lucie Elio, Dee Dee Goidel

- RC CHAIR NEIL LEFKOWITZ called the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M. He introduced Randi Herman, First Vice President of CSA, who is the liaison with the CSA Retiree Chapter.
- RANDI HERMAN reported on the recent visit to Albany to meet with NYS legislators.
  - Ms. Herman reviewed the procedures as to who pays the school lunch bill and procedures for school lunch affiliations. The DOE wants each school to be accountable and to pay for lunches served. The money will come out of each school's budget. *The New York Times* reported that this is a national issue. One community in N.Y. State hired a collection agency to get the school lunch money.
    - a) People are appalled that school agencies, such as the DOE, will be taking away money from instruction to pay for school lunches. Randi pointed out that the 1041 lunch applications form is the only time we ask about family income. At a DOE hearing, Councilman [Mark] Weprin asked if this is a right thing to do. Dr. Grimm noted that the federal government gives \$2.67 per lunch. The city must get the rest, and using the 1041 form is what we will be doing.
    - b) Randi Herman noted that CSA's position is to have universal meals certification in each community where information can be obtained from US Census data. Currently, 75 percent of NYC schools qualify for universal meals. This newly required 1041 procedure was to take effect as of Feb. 16, 2011.
  - Ms. Herman noted that the city is planning to close five more Day Care Centers as of March 1. There is a strong possibility of more closings as of July 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Gov. Cuomo wants the state budget passed on time this year. He won't be looking at government workers' pensions at this time. We have lobbying dates set for March 14-15. We must be clear with legislators about how we get these benefits, by foregoing salary increases to have this invested in retirement benefits. These benefits should be ours to keep. Failure is not an option.

MANNY KORMAN asked about school leverage regarding lunch funding.

a) Neil Lefkowitz noted that one school owes \$20,000.

b) Ms. Herman said that the Chancellor's Regulations state you can't deny lunch to a child. We tell principals to feed all children.

c) John Oricchio asked about the total school lunch budget.

d) Ms. Herman said that it totals billions of dollars. It is pitting parents against Principals. Randi noted that Dr. Grimm indicated she would accept private donations to cover deficits. For a donation of \$5,000 you can have your name on a salad bar cart.

JOHN ORICCHIO noted that Gov. Cuomo is attacking school personnel salaries in other school districts too.

RANDI HERMAN noted that we now have 120 superintendent salary lines in NYC. Prior to the Bloomberg administration there were 32 school superintendents, one for each school district, and a few for high schools and for special education and other services. Nothing like current administrative expenses. In addition, the DOE is contracting out many planning procedures. As an example, \$4 million was contracted out for a bus plan. The City Comptroller does not have oversight over DOE contracts, or over contracts for children's services.

NEIL LEFKOWITZ pointed out that under the old procedures, the Board of Education was audited on an on-going basis.

- RANDI HERMAN **Good and Welfare Report** Ernest Logan is ill, but he's doing well and sending e-mails to the staff on an on-going basis. Bruce Bryant, our attorney, is out too. Both are on the road to recovery. AvaMarie Patrick has returned, with a patch on one eye, due to eye infection.

- NEIL LEKFOWITZ The minutes of the Dec, 16, 2010 meeting were presented and accepted by the Executive Board.

- NEIL LEKFOWITZ indicated that Peter McNally, CSA Executive Vice-President, was at an advisory meeting of the Municipal Labor Committee and would have a report for the CSA Executive Board meeting. This MLC meeting was not really about contract negotiations.

A significant danger for us is the city's efforts to eliminate the Triborough Agreement. This agreement mandates that all provisions of a civil service contract remain in effect until a new contract is agreed upon. Imagine the effects on a contract negotiation if the city did not have to abide by this.

There is the issue of the premiums we have to pay for our health and Wwelfare benefits and our pensions. The City wants to change the pension system drastically for new employees and eliminate many of our current benefits.

- The per-session case (the Nager Lawsuit) has been settled. DOE employees who retired before July 1, 1998 and rendered per session work during the 12 months prior to this retirement will have these increased earnings added to their salary base for the year of their retirement, which will increase their pensions. TRS has been sending out checks based on the year of retirement. The letter accompanying the check indicates the total additional retirement money due over these years, plus 5 percent interest. Twenty percent is taken out for federal income taxes.

The letter will also detail the amount of the monthly pension increase.

This will also increase CSA Retiree Chapter dues, since the dues will be based on the higher pension. We expect to have this information available after March 20.

- DON JULIANO said that there will be a meeting on Monday, Feb. 14, 2011 to discuss the Nager case. We are awaiting official rulings. Recipients of the Nager case benefits will have the chance to decide to which TRS funds their money will go.

He questioned whether people who worked as testing assistants for the Board of Examiners, but were not regular BOE employees, are affected.

BILL PINKETT indicated that all proctors who were in the TRS system were included.

- DON JULIANO presented a warm tribute to Aaron Stern. Aaron was an AFSA organizer, was a representative of NYCESPA, was a charter member of ARA, served on COMRO and was a chapter leader on Staten Island. Neil Lekowitz told a story about Aaron Stern when he was an Assistant Principal on Staten Island. Jewel Moolenaar-Marsh spoke about how she had worked with Aaron Stern and described him as “a gentleman of breeding and culture.”

- MARK BRODSKY spoke about the Municipal Labor Committee. CSA sits on the President’s Cabinet and is included in policy and services discussions. The city has come in with a “bucket of demands” including changes to the pension system. Police, fire, sanitation and corrections departments have now aligned themselves with all other municipal labor unions for collective action. Among the city’s demands:

Home rule, with no interference from Albany for all contract negotiations.

Consolidations of all city pension systems including TRS, BRS and NYCERS, into one. There are currently five pension systems for new employees.

(The new Tier 5 pension for new employees is, technically Tier 4 chapter 5. Under this new Tier 5, new hires must work at least 22 years to qualify for a full pension).

ATR Pools: The mayor wants to eliminate these. The ATR Pool costs \$100 million per year. This is entirely due to the Mayor’s short-sightedness. All labor unions are united in opposition to this elimination.

- Teaching and Learning Conference Thirteen/Channel21 We are awaiting word from Channel 13 about training details for CSA retiree volunteers. Channel 13 now wants 80 volunteers. CSA Executive Vice President Peter McNally has asked that the training be held at CSA headquarters, as it was last year. A “greeting meeting” for CSA retiree volunteers is scheduled for March 17, which conflicts with the scheduled CSA Retiree Executive Board meeting date. Details will be given to volunteers as soon as they become available.

Volunteers who work any eight-hour session on one day may come as a guest of Channel 13 for a second day. Regular tickets for attendees cost \$300.

The Conference is scheduled for March 18-19.

- The Spring General membership meeting for the CSA Retiree Chapter will be April 30 at the North Shore Towers in Queens. We have about 5,100 members and spouses in the NYC metropolitan area, and a good turnout is expected. The featured speaker will be Prof. Jean Arrington, who wrote a book about John Snyder, the architect who designed some 400 schools in NYC for the BOE, including Erasmus Hall and De Witt Clinton H.S.

- The Nager issue (mentioned earlier) has hopefully been resolved. It is expected that all beneficiaries will be notified before the end of June 2011.
- The Educational/Cultural Committee is conducting a survey via e-mail.
- CSA is conducting pre-retirement meetings for CSA in-service members around the city. Attendance has been good, and we can expect many more retirees, thanks to the Mayor.
- NEIL LEFKOWITZ, RANDI HERMAN, MARK BRODSKY and DON JULIANO, among others, have reviewed the Retiree Chapter budget; we're in the black.
- MANNY KORMAN mentioned an article from *The New York Times* that discussed radio advertisements about schools and school finances. He stressed how important it was to be unified with the UFT and the uniformed services, so that the entire Municipal Labor Committee is on the same page when visiting legislators in Albany.
- IRWIN SHANES asked what should Retiree Chapter Executive Board members do about the conflict between the Channel 13 meeting on March 17 and the Executive Board meeting. Neil Lefkowitz said Executive Board members will be excused. Mark Brodsky is awaiting word on volunteer assignments.
- NEIL LEFKOWITZ said that CSA sent a letter of thanks to Arnie Nager for his perseverance in pursuing the per session pension case. Mr. Nager did this alone with his attorney. He approached CSA to become involved, but CSA, acting on bad advice, turned him down. Mr. Nager was also part of the Weingarten Unit.
- NEIL LEFKOWITZ announced a vacancy created by the death of Aaron Stern. Previously, the officers met and suggested John Oricchio as CSA Retiree Secretary. A motion was presented and accepted; John Oricchio was elected to fill the vacated position.
- RENEE SHULMAN suggested that consideration be given to having more women officers in the future.
- GAYLE LOCKETT announced a vacancy for an alternate to the CSA Retiree Executive board. The committee recommended Lucy Elio, a retired Assistant Principal from District 25, Queens, who has been active in CSA retiree activities. A motion was presented and accepted and Lucy Elio was elected to fill the vacant position.
 

It was also voted that the Executive Board position vacated by John Oricchio would be filled at a subsequent meeting.
- Outreach workshops are held at CSA headquarters.
  - March 1: Doug Hathaway on Welfare Fund benefits.
  - March 15: Felice Hannah will meet with Outreach Coordinators to discuss the new health care plan.
  - April 12: Don Juliano will discuss pension-related benefits.
  - May 3: The Visiting Nurse Services will discuss home health care visits.
  - June 7: Felice Hannah will discuss Social Security and pre-Medicare coverage, with the help of a Social Security representative.
  - Sept. 28: What's new in Medicare"with a representative from Medicare.
  - Sept. 28: Felice will conduct a coordinator's meeting following the Medicare presentation.

- Educational Cultural Committee: The offerings are listed in the *CSA News* and on-line. Many programs are completely filled.
- BILL PINKETT: Membership is growing nicely. We need to ensure that new retirees join the CSA Retiree Unit to help them enhance their benefits. As of Feb. 3, membership totals 9,546, which includes spouses, spousal survivors and Day Care directors.
- TRS News: The new unit values for TRS funds are unavailable until about Feb. 19. The January unit value for the Diversified Equity Fund was 58.207. The funds have gone up about 27 percent per month for the last few months. Fund values can be obtained online.

Irwin Shanes pointed out that many members of TRS are not in CSA (UFT members, for example).

- BILL PINKETT: The Mayor's plan would require new employees to work a minimum of 10 years before eligibility for pension benefits, and no one would collect any benefits before reaching age 65. Bill attended the COMRO meeting. The Mayor wants to combine five city pension plans. COMRO does not believe the pension plans are compatible with each other. For example, police and firefighters retire earlier than others municipal workers.
- NEIL LEFKOWITZ: The purpose of establishing the Retiree Chapter was to get all CSA retirees to join. The RSSA had 80 percent of retirees. We now have 90 percent. Retirees, however, are not joining the Borough Regional Units, the backbone of the CSA Retiree Chapter. We need their support to target local and citywide lawmakers, especially now with the current attacks nationwide on unions.

Joe Rosenberg: Reiterated Neil's comments. Although 90 percent of retirees are joining the CSA Retiree Chapter, only 25 percent of new retirees are joining Regional Units. Some regional units have only 20 percent of new retirees joining.

The next meeting of Regional Leaders is March 3.

- IRWIN SHANES Over \$800,000 of RSSA money went to Plan B for former RSSA members to pay for supplemental health and dental benefits. With interest, \$1,300,000 was paid out. At last report, the fund had \$120,000. Recent mailings sent out \$106,000 in claims; most of the remaining funds will pay administrative expense. And the remaining money will go into CSA Retiree Chapter funds.

Neil Lefkowitz Our resources are now about \$500,000.

- CSA may move to a new location, although this is on hold now; we'll have a new report about these plans in three months.
- NEIL LEFKOWITZ pointed out the importance of political action and pointed out that political action had begun under Aaron Stern. Dee-Dee Goidel took over from Aaron Stern after serving with him for a year, and now heads the Political Action Committee.
- Expanding Regional Units: It is very important to have local functions with local legislators. CSA Regional Units and CSA active units held several such successful functions last year. Plans are underway to do this again.
- Visit to Albany: The focus of our Albany visit will be to persuade lawmakers to let us keep our benefits in their present state. One helpful legislator is Diane Savino. Our Albany representative, Alithia Rodriguez, has met with her to let her know our position.

We must worry about attempts to overthrow the Triborough Agreement and attempts to hold a state Constitutional Convention, where rights that are constitutionally granted to us can be overturned.

State Sen. Martin Golden, a Republican, is now in charge of pensions legislation. We will concentrate on Long Island legislators, among whom are strong Republican senators, during this visit.

The Mayor will be in Albany on Monday. Pat De Meo has alerted Alithia Rodriguez-Rolon to attend Sen. Andrew Lanza's reception on our behalf. Both parties are determined to see that the Governor and the Mayor don't get their way. We will tell them about the 1970s when we agreed to no raises to preserve our pension benefits and how unjust it would be to cut these benefits at this point.

The NYC Comptroller needs information about possible Medicaid fraud or Medicare frauds. We plan to meet with him.

- We are planning meetings with City Council members. Many are young and new to government and are unaware of our current situation or our former situation. Dee-Dee Goidel is recruiting new retiree members for ongoing political activities.

Vinnie Navarro pointed out that our COLA is protected by state law, not the state Constitution, and can be changed. He pointed out that we get Medicare B benefits through City Council legislation, and that this too can be taken away.

John Oricchio spoke about our current COLA benefits, and possible changes.

Neil Lefkowitz said one aim of Gov. Cuomo's balanced budget is to see to it that the cost of borrowing doesn't affect the state's bond ratings. New Jersey's bond rating went down.

Vinnie Navarro The Governor doesn't want to increase property taxes. The cap is to remain at 2 percent.

Neil Lefkowitz Only New York City, Yonkers, and Buffalo do not vote on school taxes. Many municipalities have reserves for education.

Dee-Dee Goidel Thanked Pat De Meo for arranging the meetings in March in Albany with legislators.

- VINNIE NAVARRO asked about the CSA budget. Neil Lefkowitz indicated that meetings are scheduled in March to finalize the budget, which is now about 90 percent complete. The work will continue when Ernest Logan returns.
- The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,  
Marvin Goodman