

## **NYSUT Retirees Council of Central New York-Council 7**

### **Minutes of the Executive Board**

**March 8, 2021**

(Corrected minutes)

**Present:** Loretta Donlon, Melody (Mel) Mariani, Margo Buckingham, Ed O'Rourke, Candace Johnson, Paul Farfaglia, Lilli Rastegar, Bill Spreter, and NYSUT Retiree Consultant AnneMarie Voutsinas

**Absent:** Carol Graham, Mary Hanus

**Order of Business for Today's Meeting:** Loretta has requested a timed rehearsal of our opening remarks for the first Zoom membership meeting on 3/16/21 in order to allow Steve Kramer to know when to begin his presentation.

Loretta will take two minutes to give a brief introduction of herself and then she will introduce each of the officers and directors present.

Candace Johnson: I am the 1<sup>st</sup> VP and in charge of membership. I am the face of the person you send your membership to. I am a retiree of Liverpool School District, a former member of ULFA board, Chair of ULFA VOTE/COPE, and former building rep for Liverpool High School. At this time, we have 1407 RC7 members. Please feel free to check our newsletter or website for information.

Bill Spreter: I am the 2<sup>nd</sup> VP in charge of Legislation and Vote/Cope. I am the Central New York Coordinator for Vote/Cope out of the NYSUT Syracuse Regional Office. As a former local President, Vice President of the Hannibal Faculty Association and officer of the Oswego County Teachers, I have over forty years in union service and 34 years teaching.

We have had good news with the Senate's passage of the American Rescue Plan. It delivers \$1,400 to qualifying Americans, increased child tax credits, higher SNAP allocations, housing assistance, extra funding for COVID vaccinations, and more money for schools, and state and local governments so in need of funds as a result of the COVID crisis. Passage may occur on March 9, 2021.

The Federal aid allocated to New York's schools and state and local governments is so important because our state's budget has been depleted due to our combatting the pandemic. The budget hole is \$15 billion, and the Governor has

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planned on large cuts to schools, as well as state agencies and localities. With the infusion of funding from the Federal government the state's fiscal situation is improved for a short time. However, the pandemic has hit the state so hard that high budget deficits are likely to continue for years without an added rescue from the Federal government.

Consequently, the Governor, embattled with crises, supports supplanting Federal funds to schools instead of using state aid. He takes back the regular state aid by a complicated formula that is unfair to both rich and poor school districts alike. This is not what the Federal government intended when it passed its Federal aid to schools. Under his proposed budget, state and local funding for police, fire, EMTs, and other necessary services might be cut as well.

That's why NYSUT, in coalition with other unions, proposes a series of taxes on billionaires and ultra-millionaires in the state to help bridge the gap. And, when we look at wealth growth during the pandemic, it is estimated that the 141 billionaires in New York have earned \$81 billion more in wealth during the start of the pandemic. At the same time New York has created 72% more millionaires from 2009-2016. Many are ultra-millionaires and could afford to pay more in taxes to help all of New York emerge from this ongoing economic crisis.

Our officers and Board members have been meeting with our state and local representatives to make them aware of the ongoing budget crisis, its impact on schools and localities as well as older Americans. We sincerely hope our legislators can persuade the Governor not to take a draconian approach to the years-long budget crisis but take steps to increase revenue in order to continue services.

As always, your letters, your use of the NYSUT MAC, your donations to Vote/Cope to help fund this battle, are more than welcome and vitally necessary. Stay healthy! Get vaccinated! Bill Spreter, 2nd VP RC 7 and President, CNY NYSARA

Melody (Mel) Mariani: I'm Melody Mariani, but everyone calls me Mel. I am your RC7 secretary. I also am on the Committee of 100 PAC and the RAC. I retired from the Syracuse City School District. I am the one who takes all the minutes of the



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RC7 Board Meetings and general membership meetings and makes sure they are available to Executive Board members and all members of RC7. The minutes of this general membership meeting will be available on our website.

Carol Graham: Carol will have 2 minutes for her presentation as treasurer.

Margo Buckingham: I am the immediate past president of RC7. I have served as the RC7 treasurer as well. I retired from Fayetteville-Manlius. Currently I am on the RAC.

Lilli Rastegar: I am an RC Director and the Chairperson of the Scholarship Committee. RC7 awards four \$1000 scholarships every year. If you paid your dues by 12/31/2020 you can apply for a scholarship. Applications are on the RC7 website and are being accepted from 3/15 to 4/16/2021.

Ed O'Rourke: I am an RC7 Director in charge of programs for meetings. Please feel free to email me if you have any ideas or suggestions for topics you wish to see at upcoming RC7 general membership meetings.

Paul Farfaglia: I am retired from the Jordan-Elbridge Central School District. While there I served as president of the Teacher's Association for 25 years. I also served for 9 years on the NYSUT Board of Directors and for 10 years as a trustee to the NYS Teacher's Retirement System. I am currently a director on the RC7 Executive Board.

Mary Hanus: Mary is a director on the RC7 Executive Board who deals with locations for in-person meetings.

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Anne Marie Voutsinas: I am one of 11 NYSUT Regional Retiree Service Consultants in NYS and Florida. I answer questions and provide information to those retired and about to retire members. Please feel free to contact me via NYSUT or RC7 websites.

**Our time for all of our introductions took 22 minutes.**

Board Members asked Anne Marie to ask Steve Kramer if he would allow us to record this meeting presentation so that we could have it on our website for members who could not attend and members who wish to refer to it.

**Last order of business:** We chose to honor the passing of Phil Dello Stritto with a \$75 donation to a charity of his liking: Cayuga Museum of History and Art.

Respectfully submitted,

Mel Mariani

Secretary