**PEF Region 8 PAC Meeting Minutes**

**February 8, 2022**

**6:00 PM Zoom Meeting**

**Attendees:**

Danielle Bridger, Jeanette Santos, Margaret Ann, Carmela Triolo, Chris O’Neill, Greg Marra, Kate Richardson, Kevin Jones, Mario Chiarello, Myron Getman, Paul Burns, Belinda Jackson, Mike Kuzia-Carmel, Martin Robinson, Sheryl Sperry, Mickey Dobbin, Jim Desso, Sharon DeSilva, Ron

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

* Danielle Bridger called the meeting to order shortly after 6 PM. Some brief remarks and discussion followed before the next agenda item.
* Moving forward, meeting information (e.g., zoom info, agenda, minutes from past meeting) will be available on the PEF website. Danielle has been working with Mario and Kristen to add retirees to the email distribution list. This way, they will get notifications regarding all of the monthly PEF committee meetings.
* The IT Civil Service exam has been rescheduled for March.
* Danielle doesn’t have the current list of PAC leaders to send the prioritization email.

1. **ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA**

* Martin Robinson made a motion to accept the agenda as written.
* Mario Chiarello, Sheryl Sperry, and Margaret Ann seconded the motion.
* The agenda was accepted without objection

1. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

* Prior to the discussion of the minutes from the January 2022 meeting, there was brief discussion regarding the initiative to change the current retirement tier system. Belinda Jackson asked a question about the vesting term for Tiers 5 and 6. The vesting term is five years for Tier 5 and ten years for Tier 6. Tier 6 NYS employees are required to contribute 6% of their salary to the retirement system for the duration of their employment. Employees in Tiers 1-3 are only required to contribute 3%. The objective of this initiative is to improve the benefits for Tier 6 employees to attract new people to come work for New York State.
* The minutes from the January 2022 Region 8 PAC meeting were discussed. Danielle has been posting them alongside the monthly meeting announcements. This is a good arrangement moving forward. Mario Chiarello made a motion to accept the meeting minutes as written. The motion was seconded and unanimously accepted.

1. **REGIONAL COORDINATOR COMMENTS**

* Danielle Bridger led the discussion as the regional coordinator.
* The March 1995 Executive Board agreement formed the PEF PAC and established the original rules governing the committee structure and function. There have been several changes since then, with the ethics decision from 5-6 years ago having established the current PAC officers, roles, and organizational structure.
* Jeanette Santos asked what PAC rules are currently being considered for change?
* Chris O’Neill provided some clarification of historic attendance rules governing in-person meetings. In the past, there were minimum attendance requirements in order to maintain membership in the PEF PAC. Attendance rules have not been enforced in recent years, especially since COVID-19 forced PEF committees to move to remote meetings. Danielle stated that she wants to ensure that PAC isn’t in violation of any Executive Board orders or the PEF Constitution. Jim Desso asked if PAC is working from the existing committee rules or if they are being changed? Danielle stated that she is going to post the committee rules for group consensus prior to submitting them to statewide PAC, who has granted an extension on considering any changes.

1. **PAC RULES - REGION 8**

* Myron Getman recommended that meeting info be sent out in a reminder email to ensure members who want to can attend. Kevin Jones expanded on the historic disagreements over PAC rules. There have been multiple efforts to update rules on attendance to incentivize members staying active. Members who weren’t consistently attending monthly meetings were sent “warning” letters via snail mail from PEF Council that their PAC membership was contingent upon attendance. These letters were meant to foster participation, although nobody ever got kicked off the PAC as a result of this process.
* Michael Blue asked if a rules subcommittee would be formed. Danielle Bridger stated that PAC will do that for any proposed rule changes.
* **Danielle will ask for another 1-2 month extension on considering Region 8 PAC rules from statewide PAC and will get a list of all credentialed members.**

1. **LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST**

* Danielle Bridger stated that Region 7 PAC is moving forward with their legislative breakfast in Lake Placid. She asked what would Region 8 PAC like to do?
* Recent local events have been postponed (Puerto Rican Gala, Women’s Event featuring senator Kirsten Gillibrand) due to the risks associated with COVID.
* Myron Getman stated that PEF lobbying for telecommuting and also attempting to conduct face-to-face meetings sets the union up for bad public relations/media coverage.
* Martin Robinson stated that there is no need for PEF to meet with legislative representatives in March – we could defer to a later date when the transmission rates have subsided.
* Danielle Bridger stated that the legislative session typically ends at the end of March when the state budget is passed. Sharon DeSilva stated that the caucus has been pushed to April 10-12.
* Michael Blue stated that postponing the legislative breakfast is a good idea, citing the logistical and financial challenges with securing a venue and having to put a deposit down and potentially lose that money.
* Kevin Jones stated that he couldn’t recall a time when PEF PAC got into the newspaper (good or bad), so the risk of media blowback from holding in-person meetings is relatively small. The limiting factor here is the legislative schedule. If members are continuing to meet virtually and aren’t in Albany then they won’t come to Albany for the breakfast.
* The Albany County Central Federation of Labor has been holding virtual meetings.

* Myron Getman stated that other sectors of labor harbor resentment towards telecommuting workers. Kate Richardson stated that telecommuting has been effective in limiting the spread of COVID.
* Mario Chiarello stated that appointing a PAC PAL to local legislators might be a way to do lobbying in the interim. Martin Robinson stated that the legislative session ends in June. Kevin Jones stated that the legislative breakfast is an opportunity for PEF to develop relationships with state legislators.
* Danielle stated that scheduling the legislative breakfast will be tabled for now. The key indicator will be when the legislators physically return to Albany.
* Margaret Ann stated that primaries will be held in June; the deadline for petitions is March 1. Re-districting has been a priority for legislators.
* Sharon DeSilva posted the [legislative calendar](https://nyassembly.gov/leg/calendar/) to the meeting chat.

1. **LOBBYING ISSUES**

* Environmental Health Staffing: Myron Getman participated in a meeting with the Executive Board prior to the PEF Convention and got an agenda item added regarding the staffing shortages at laboratory facilities throughout the state. Laboratory facilities are critically short-staffed and will no longer be able to maintain current functions and programs if staff attrition continues and positions aren’t backfilled. The Toxicology Research Laboratory is essentially gone, NYSDOH has no Radon testing program, and several other programs are on the brink of folding. New York State has developed a methodology for sampling/testing for asbestos in drinking water. Although this methodology has been shared with commercial labs, it isn’t commercially viable so those labs won’t perform that analysis. New York State risks falling further behind with regards to emerging contaminants such as PFAS, which could lead to widespread public health crises. Morale at lab facilities is extremely low, most proposed staffing positions are in administration, and the current state budget is inadequate to support these facilities. The Workforce Development Joint Committee has come out in support of this issue. Myron has been drafting a personal letter to send to the Governor’s office and is building a lobbying effort. Michael Blue will provide Myron with contact information for Paul Webster, the director of the Environmental Advocacy Group. NYSDEC Commissioner Basil Seggos has stated his intent to add positions; NYSDEC is aware of ongoing understaffing problems. Sharon DeSilva will raise this issue to statewide PAC level and will contact PEF Vice President Randi DiAntonio.
* Mickey Dobbin stated that there are similar understaffing issues at the New York State Museum.
* Statewide PAC issues: The legislative issues highlighted by the statewide PAC are as follows:
  + Restoring safety net services for at-risk individuals
  + Conveyance of public assets and privatization of safety net services
  + Adjusting parole reform
  + Streamlining hiring processes and attracting talent
  + Preventing facility closures/consolidation
  + Enhancing New York State’s IT capacity
  + Tier 6 reform
  + Retiree issues
  + Nurses Across New York Program
  + Healthcare worker retention bonus
* Mickey Dobbin called attention to Starbucks employing union busting tactics across the country.
* Danielle Bridger motioned to adjourn the meeting. Sharon DeSilva seconded. No objections.

**MEETING ADJOURNED**