**PEF Region 8 PAC Special Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, September 1, 2022**

**6:00 PM Zoom Meeting**

**Attendees:** Barbara Stransky, Bill Ferguson, Danielle Bridger, Ken Ferro, Catherine Dell Angelo, Michael Blue, Brendan McKenna, Kate Richardson, Martin Robinson, Yvonne Ficke, Mike Kuzia-Carmel, Prakash Lal, Jim Desso, M, Mickey Dobbin, Sharon DeSilva, Rich Jones, Dr. Stacey TB, Ray Moroz, Herb Hennings, Richard Jones, Myron Getman, Paul Lawrence, Yolanda Pittman

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

* Danielle Bridger called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM.

1. **ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA**

* Danielle Bridger shared the meeting agenda with the group and made a motion to accept the agenda as written. Danielle stated that they had reached out to candidates throughout PEF Region 8 over the previous weekend to schedule them for the interviews this evening. Each candidate was provided with the PEF legislative questionnaire. Prakash and Mike Blue asked for the candidate responses to the legislative questionnaire to be provided to the group. Danielle stated that she would email them out once she has a list of attendees. Mike Kuzia-Carmel recorded the meeting attendees and sent this information along to Danielle.

1. **CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS**

* **Andy McAdoo (NYS Assembly District 112)**
  + Mr. McAdoo gave a brief overview of his pre-political life, his connections to St. Lawrence County, and his underlying reasons for seeking public office.
  + Martin asked Mr. McAdoo how he would work with PEF to resolve ongoing recruitment and retainment challenges in the NYS workforce. Mr. McAdoo stated that NYSDEC employees have told him that low morale stems from poor leadership. He supports allowing NYS workforce to communicate directly with NYS Senate and Assembly.
  + Martin asked Mr. McAdoo if he would support the continuation of telecommuting for NYS employees. Mr. McAdoo said yes, and indicated that there is evidence of increased productivity under telecommuting programs.
* **Michelle Ostrelich (NYS Senate District 44)**
  + Ms. Ostrelich gave a brief overview of her political background. She became politically active following the 2016 presidential election. She stated that her opponent, Jim Tedisco, is anti-choice, anti-marriage equality, and anti-human rights.
  + Martin asked Ms. Ostrelich if she would support the continuation of telecommuting for NYS employees. She stated that the return to the office has caused attrition in the NYS work force and that she plans to fight for flexibility in telecommuting moving forward.
  + Martin asked Ms. Ostrelich how she would work with PEF to resolve ongoing recruitment and retainment challenges in the NYS workforce. Ms. Ostrelich stressed the importance of establishing pipelines for future NYS employees (e.g., high schools, colleges, and BOCES) and also getting individuals help with Civil Service exams.
* **Matt Castelli (21st U.S. Congressional District)**
  + Mr. Castelli gave an overview of his background and experience, emphasizing his ties to the region as a graduate of Siena College and his service as a former CIA agent (Central Intelligence Agency, not the Culinary Institute of America).
  + Martin asked Mr. Castelli how he will help labor unions in the face of an anti-labor/anti-Union Supreme Court. Mr. Castelli emphasized his support of labor unions and his support of the PRO Act.
* **Mary-Beth Walsh (NYS Assembly District 112)**
  + Ms. Walsh gave an overview of her background and experience. She is the incumbent (Republican) and has been in office since 2016, when she received the PEF endorsement. She has been an attorney for over 30 years and came up through local government. Ms. Walsh stated that there has been an issue with “sloppy drafting” since the NYS Senate flipped to Democrats in 2019.
  + Martin asked Ms. Walsh how she would work with PEF to resolve ongoing recruitment and retainment challenges in the NYS workforce. Ms. Walsh emphasized her support for the NYS workforce through legislation and the state budget. She also stated that healthcare careers don’t pay enough.
  + Ken Ferro asked Ms. Walsh about pension reform. Ms. Walsh stated that she supports Tier 6 reform.
  + Martin asked Ms. Walsh if she would support the continuation of telecommuting for NYS employees. She stated that the degree of telecommuting should depend on the type of job, but that telecommuting is the wave of the future. Ms. Walsh stated that there is value in in-person meetings.
  + Ms. Walsh closed by stating: “We might not agree 100% of the time, but I try to listen.”
* Attendees agreed that no Ad Hoc questions should be asked to candidates.
* **Carrie Woerner (NYS Assembly District 113)**
  + Ms. Woerner gave a brief overview of her background and experience. She has been in office for eight years (four terms) and is a self-described practical and fierce advocate. Ms. Woerner has helped in passing over 65+ bills and stated that she has lots of constituents that are NYS workers.
  + Martin asked Ms. Woerner how she will work with PEF to resolve ongoing recruitment and retainment challenges in the NYS workforce. Ms. Woerner pointed to generational divides, with younger people valuing flexible schedules and elements that aren’t currently favored by state jobs. Employers, including NYS, have to come to terms with these dynamics.
  + Martin asked Ms. Woerner about the use of contract employees in place of NYS employees and Cost-Benefit Analyses (CBAs). Ms. Woerner stated that CBAs are critical and that contract employees should be reserved for specific circumstances (ex. Level 1 call centers).
  + Ms. Woerner closed by expressing her gratitude for the support from PEF and organized labor.
* **Alexandra Velella (NYS Assembly District 110)**
  + Ms. Velella gave a brief overview of her background and experience. She is an attorney from the Albany area. She works for a law firm that represents Unions in Workers’ Comp litigation. Ms. Velella stated that there is a lot of dysfunction in NYS government and that change is needed in Albany to restore Affordable, Safe, and Economically Prosperous conditions.
  + Martin asked Ms. Velella how she will work with PEF to resolve ongoing recruitment and retainment challenges in the NYS workforce. Ms. Velella emphasized the stability, security, and benefits as the biggest draws to NYS employment. She also emphasized focusing on recruitment pipelines for new workers (ex. Colleges).
  + Martin asked Ms. Velella if she would support the continuation of telecommuting for NYS employees. Ms. Velella stated that telecommuting allowances should be job-dependent; some positions necessitate reporting to a workplace. She also stated that flexibility is important for other types of jobs and that there is room for a degree of telecommuting.
  + Martin asked Ms. Velella about the use of contract employees in place of NYS employees and Cost-Benefit Analyses (CBAs). Ms. Velella stated that using state agencies is a form of Quality Control, although it might not always be possible.
  + Ms. Velella expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to talk with PEF members.
* **Andrea Smyth (NYS Senate District 43)**
  + Ms. Smyth gave a brief overview of her background and experience. She is a Florida transplant and has over 30 years of experience as an advocate for healthcare and human services. She is a union person and strongly believes in unionized workforces and pensions. Ms. Smyth emphasized the importance of improving water/broadband/miscellaneous infrastructure.
  + Martin asked Ms. Smyth how she will work with PEF to resolve ongoing recruitment and retainment challenges in the NYS workforce. Ms. Smyth emphasized the need to reverse the erosion/declination of salaries and benefits for state workers. Ms. Smyth also stated that NYS employees should be given university credit for on-the-job training, especially in care fields.
  + Martin asked Ms. Smyth if she would support the continuation of telecommuting for NYS employees. Ms. Smyth stated that telecommuting has proven to be effective, although she acknowledged that 100% telecommuting would not be possible in all instances.
  + Martin asked Ms. Smyth about the use of contract employees in place of NYS employees and Cost-Benefit Analyses (CBAs). Ms. Smyth emphasized the importance of CBAs. She discussed the creation of public authorities around critical care elements with sunset and reauthorization built-in. She used Medicaid Managed Care Reform as an example of this.
  + Ms. Smyth closed by expressing her support for PEF and her experience in the mental health field.
* **Phil Steck (NYS Assembly District 110)**
  + Mr. Steck gave a brief overview of his background and experience. Mr. Steck has been in office since 2012. He self-describes as strongly pro-union and he received the endorsement of the AFL-CIO. Mr. Steck is the chair of the committee on alcoholism and substance abuse and has done much work in these areas. He helped launch the New York Matters Program which dispatched first responders to mental health & drug crises. Mr. Steck also opposed the OASES/OMH merger proposal.
  + Martin asked Mr. Steck how he will work with PEF to resolve ongoing recruitment and retainment challenges in the NYS workforce. Mr. Steck emphasized the proposed reforms to Tier 6 and making the pension system more attractive to new hires.
  + Martin asked Mr. Steck if he would support the continuation of telecommuting for NYS employees. Mr. Steck emphasized the importance of maintaining flexibility with regards to telecommuting and generally expressed support for it.
  + Martin asked Mr. Steck about the use of contract employees in place of NYS employees and Cost-Benefit Analyses (CBAs). Mr. Steck expressed support for expanding the NYS workforce and re-iterated his opposition to the OASES/OMH merger proposal. Mr. Steck stated that consolidation is an excuse for reducing the NYS workforce.
* **John T. McDonald (NYS Assembly District 108)**
  + Mr. McDonald gave a brief overview of his background and experience. Mr. McDonald is seeking a 6th term and has been in office for 10 years. He is a former mayor of the City of Cohoes and his father was a PEF member for 40 years. Mr. McDonald stated that he has always had a good working relationship with PEF.
  + Martin asked Mr. McDonald how he will work with PEF to resolve ongoing recruitment and retainment challenges in the NYS workforce. Mr. McDonald stated that the NYS government has pushed to minimize the size of the unionized state workforce and that it is incumbent upon political leaders in the NYS Senate and Assembly to demonstrate meaningful commitment to NYS Labor.
  + Martin asked Mr. McDonald if he would support the continuation of telecommuting for NYS employees. Mr. McDonald acknowledged that there are some concerns from local business owners (ex. restaurants, commercial real estate) about telecommuting, but he expressed his support for maintaining telecommuting as an option for NYS workers.
  + Mr. McDonald expressed his gratitude for having the opportunity to talk with PEF.

1. **CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENTS**

* Kate Richardson made a motion to endorse Matt Castelli in the 21st U.S. Congressional District. Martin Robinson seconded the motion. Barb stated that the AFL-CIO did not endorse Mr. Castelli.
  + The motion to endorse Matt Castelli was carried by a vote of 10 ayes and 4 abstentions.
* Mike Blue made a motion to endorse John T. McDonald in the NYS Assembly 108th District. Sharon DeSilva seconded the motion.
  + The motion to endorse John T. McDonald was carried by a vote of 10 ayes and 4 abstentions.
* Mike Blue made a motion to endorse Patricia Fahy in the NYS Assembly 109th District. Sharon DeSilva seconded the motion.
  + The motion to endorse Patricia Fahy was carried by a vote of 11 ayes.
* Mike Blue made a motion to endorse Phil Steck and not Alexandra Velella in the NYS Assembly 110th District. Sharon DeSilva seconded the motion. A brief debate was held over endorsing Mr. Steck over Ms. Velella. Catherine DellAngelo stated that Mr. Steck had copped out on the telecommuting question. Multiple members expressed support for Mr. Steck.
  + The motion to endorse Phil Steck was carried by a vote of 10 ayes and 1 nay.
* Kate Richardson made a motion to endorse Mary-Beth Walsh and not Ben McAdoo in the NYS Assembly 112th District. Mike Blue seconded the motion.
  + The motion to endorse Mary-Beth Walsh was carried by a vote of 9 ayes and 2 nays.
* Mike Blue made a motion to endorse Carrie Woerner in the NYS Assembly 113th District. Sharon DeSilva seconded the motion.
  + The motion to endorse Carrie Woerner was carried by a vote of 9 ayes, 1 nay, and 1 abstention.
* Mike Blue made a motion to not endorse Matt Simpson in the NYS Assembly 114th District at this time. Sharon DeSilva seconded the motion.
  + The motion to not endorse Matt Simpson was carried by a vote of 11 ayes.
* Mike Blue made a motion to endorse Andrea Smyth in the NYS Senate 43rd District. Mickey Dobbin seconded the motion.
  + The motion to endorse Andrea Smyth was carried by a vote of 11 ayes.
* Catherine DellAngelo made a motion to endorse Jim Tedisco and not Michelle Ostrelich in the NYS Senate 44th District. Dbate on this endorsement was opened. Mike Blue stated that Jim Tedisco was not really supportive of organized labor. Mickey Dobbin stated that the local IBEW endorsed Ms. Ostrelich and that local trade unions were supportive of her campaign.
  + The motion to endorse Jim Tedisco was carried by a vote of 5 ayes, 3 nays, and 2 abstentions.
* Danielle Bridger made a motion to endorse Neil Breslin over Richard Amedore in the NYS Senate. Sharon DeSilva and Mike Blue seconded the motion.
  + The motion to endorse Neil Breslin was carried by a vote of 10 ayes and 1 abstention.
* Mike Blue made a motion to not endorse either Eric Ball nor Peter Oberacker in the NYS Senate 51st District at this time. Mickey Dobbin seconded the motion.
  + The motion to not endorse a candidate in the NYS Senate 51st District race at this time was carried by a vote of 11 ayes.

1. **QUESTIONS**

* No additional questions were discussed following the endorsement motions.

1. **ADJOURN**

* Danielle Bridger made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mike Blue and Sharon DeSilva seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:43 PM.