



Unit 9200 – Employees of Westchester County  
Civil Service Employees Association  
112 East Post Road  
White Plains, New York 10601

Minutes of Open Monthly Member Meeting

APRIL 6, 2010

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**Karen Pecora** – President

**Judith Brome** – 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President / Union Representative

**Kwabena Manu** – 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President / Union Representative

**James Kelly** – 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President

**Junio I. Alvarado** – 4<sup>th</sup> Vice President / Union Representative

**Michael Wolf** – Treasurer

**Kimberly Gotzen** – Secretary

- **Officers in Attendance:** All officers were in attendance, as well as Local 860 President Jack McPhillips, Region 3 President Billy Riccaldo, Region 3 Political Action Coordinator Kelley Johnson, and Aminata Stephens, Vincent Castaldo and Jose M. Schiffino from CSEA Organizing
- Meeting was held at the Westchester County Center, White Plains
- Meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by President Pecora
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Moment of silence for departed Members and family members and troops serving throughout the world

Agenda Topics for Discussion

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- Guest Speakers: County Legislators addressed the members and answered questions:

**Legislator Ken Jenkins (Chairman)** ➤ I would like to thank President Pecora and the Executive Board for the pleasure of allowing the Legislators to come and speak to the CSEA members. Government, not just public employees, is under attack, and government has forgotten that union members who do the work are the reason they got to the level that they are, from those who made sacrifices to allow them to reach those goals. The Board of Legislators are the board of directors for a 1.9 billion dollar corporation, and our job is to evaluate investments to determine if they are bringing a rate of return acceptable to the taxpayer, and “investing in people is the best investment that we can make.”

As far as the 166 million dollar budget deficit that County Executive Astorino is claiming, “that number is as bogus as bogus can be, and we’re calling the County Executive on that and telling him that this number is a scare tactic.” It is not the reality, because it does not take into account federal funds, and other revenues and savings, and includes increases in operating expenses that are not substantiated. Employee health care contributions was mentioned as a measure for reducing the budget gap, but regarding CSEA’s contract “an agreement is an agreement.” We need to look at using competition to reduce costs, such as the approximately 20 million dollars that can be saved either by POMCO or through another comparable company – we were able to obtain similar savings with medical coverage for the WMC while also honoring their union contracts.

Our challenges will begin in 2011, but in the meantime, “we don’t need to demonize public employees” and threaten them with layoffs. That’s not going to happen, because we need public employees to provide services. We have built the Westchester we have now, which has the lowest recidivism rate in the state, and the lowest homeless population in the region, because we have great programs which we have invested in, like job training and housing programs, such as Westchester being the first County in the state to institute a foreclosure counseling program and provide direct assistance, and “that happens because of the hard work of all of you, and the investments we have made together.”

We are fighting hard to say we don’t have a problem today – the job of the County Executive is to manage the organization, not make employees panic that they will lose their jobs. We have 40% of our painters and other workers sitting in the office, while there are 182 million dollars worth of capital projects that have been funded but not yet started. We need to look out for the average working people in Westchester, which is the majority of the people in our County, not rich people, which is what we are trying to do and we will keep doing, together. The Board of Legislators does not create or negotiate contracts, but gets them after they have been negotiated – we are at the back end of that process. The Board knows that public employees don’t make \$100,000.00 a year and don’t make “Cadillac benefits” – “we know that you are the ones who work to create the award winning programs that make Westchester the great County that it is.”

### Questions from Members answered by Legislator Jenkins:

#### ➤ Would you support a Retirement Incentive?

We've asked about a State retirement incentive. It sounds good at first, but once you do the math, it may be – how many people would be eligible, and how many would take advantage of it? There may be a retirement incentive for public employees in the near future, but we have no information to date.

#### ➤ Is there a plan to privatize clinics in DCMH?

We have not received any concrete proposals regarding privatizing clinics. There was a proposal from DCMH for consolidation for savings, but it was not complete. The County Executive is good at delivering a condensed message that does not say very much, but with a nice presentation and repeating it enough times, people start to believe it.

#### ➤ The County Executive seems to get a lot of time in the media, but the Board of Legislators and the unions are not afforded equal time. Is there a way to get our message out as well?

We know that the media is not going to carry our message, so we make it available to the public on our website, [www.westchesterlegislators.com](http://www.westchesterlegislators.com), which has copies of all of the Board of Legislators' proposals.

#### ➤ Westchestergov.com recently had a slanted article on pension reform. Is there anything that can be done about erroneous information being disseminated by the County Executive's office?

The Board of Legislators has no control over the content of the County website. Visit the BOL website, or call our office (995-2800) to become part of our E-blast list to receive media releases on what the Board is working on. Employees should also make their opinions known wherever they can, such as on newspaper website blogs.

#### ➤ Is there is any truth to the large budget deficits projected for the future, and which areas will be targeted?

The 166 million dollar number is fictitious and it assumes NO revenues coming in and NO savings being generated. The number is certainly not zero, but we know that it is nowhere near the projections coming out of the County Executive's office. We have to go through the budget process and see, and we will not necessarily agree with a zero percent tax increase before we know what it means.

**Legislator Judy Myers (Majority Whip)** ➤ We are in challenging times, and what is adding to the challenge is fulfilling our commitment to the budget that we passed in December 2009. It was a painstakingly balanced budget with a tax increase, and we made a lot of commitments and signed contracts with many groups, but we're not seeing the revenues coming in or the projects being started. What we thought was going to happen this year with these projects, all of a sudden we are now seeing a lot of road blocks. We are constantly watching the budget every day and making adjustments, and this is no different than any other budget year. Mortgage recording taxes and sales taxes are down, and tax certioraris are up, which we make adjustments for, but to say the sky is falling now when we don't know it to be the case is wrong, and to not honor our commitments for those projects for which taxes have already been earmarked, is a disservice to Westchester taxpayers. We hope that you are all with us as we continue to fight.

**Legislator Tom Abinanti (Majority Leader)** ➤ I have been on the Board of Legislators for 19 years. It's unfortunate that we only get together like this when there's a perceived crisis, and we need to meet together more often. This is a difficult time for people who believe government has a role to play in our community. If you keep telling people that government is the problem, eventually people are going to believe it, and now we are faced with the results of this, and we need to understand how important government is in our community.

Government services are made up of the people who pay for them, the people who use them, and the people WHO DELIVER THEM, and too often the people who deliver government services are taken for granted, and people look at them as a bunch of freeloaders who don't do anything. "The people in this room and the people who deliver government services are like everybody else – they go to work every day, they put in their 35 hours, and they expect to be paid fairly for what they do. You give up certain things like higher salary for benefits and retirement security, and it's not fair to start treating you now like you are in private industry. You weren't treated like private industry when private industry was making lots of money, and we know that when private industry starts making lots of money again, any cuts you take today are not going to be restored."

We understand how important you are to the whole system, we need to thank you for your service, and in our country, you get thanked by getting paid. "In this country we hire CEO's and reward them for saving money by mistreating employees, and we're not going to let that happen in Westchester County." We have to work together to keep unions whole, and at the same time we have to make sure that the people who need government services continue to receive them, and that we don't drain the taxpayers, and we can do this by working together. Talk to your neighbors about what you do – in addition to being a taxpayer you work in and are a part of the community. It's not fair to blame part of the community for the problems of the entire community.

**Legislator Bill Burton** ➤ A social contract is when people decide that there are certain things that they cannot do for themselves and they need an entity to do it for them, which is where government and public employees come in, and we reward you for performing those services by paying you fairly for the time that you put in. "Your jobs are being threatened by the bogus budget deficit numbers." When the offer was made by the County Executive of \$18,000.00 raises to some of his staffers, most Legislators protested, but it is a symptom of the way the government is now being run. "The Board of Legislators is prepared to say to the County Executive that you are going to run the County fairly for the benefit of those who work, those who pay taxes, those who provide the services, and those who receive the services. This County works because everybody receives their fair share."

**Legislator Alfreda Williams** ➤ As a former member of CSEA, I know what it is to work in a civil service job, to wait for raises, and to be written up for any little thing. I understand that this County has provided a wonderful safety net for those who need it, and we have an obligation to continue that as best we can. "Maybe the County Executive should spend less time talking about the deficit we may have, and more time trying to find ways to bring in more money to reduce it, because people need protection and the services that the County provides, and we need you to continue to provide these services. If we discontinue these services, people will be out of work, they will no longer be paying taxes, and will eventually need the same services they were previously providing." Children and senior citizens especially need these services, and with the effort that you to make every day, we can continue to provide them.

➤ **Sick Bank Balance:**

The approximate balance of days currently in the Sick Bank is over **6000** with the new donations in February 2010. The Sick Bank balance will be available on our website [www.CSEA9200.com](http://www.CSEA9200.com) every month.

➤ **County Executive Astorino Attending Next Monthly Meeting:**

We have confirmed that the County Executive will attend our monthly meeting in May. There are 3800 CSEA members, and only 120 people are here tonight. We need to show the County Executive when he comes to our meeting that we are willing to stand up and fight for our jobs, and we need to recruit members and their families to attend.

➤ **Handout: Board of Legislators' Preliminary Analysis of County Executive's Projections for 2011**

The Board of Legislators analyzed the County Executive's presentation and projections. Our salaries and raises have already been budgeted, so there is NO increased cost; the COLA (cost of living adjustment) is inflated by almost 50%; and omitted from his projections were 19.3 million dollars in Medicaid subsidies, as well as 20 million dollars in savings in health care costs from POMCO or alternate company, and the 16 million dollars in savings from County Departments which was a part of his own presentation. The Board's analysis and exposing the inaccuracies in the County Executive's projections is the first step in helping us fight the attack on public employees.

➤ **Public Relations Committee:**

We had the first meeting of our newly formed Public Relations Committee yesterday. We have a two fold problem: we are fighting with the County Executive who wants us to give up our raises, take pay decreases, take 5 days delayed pay, and pay into our health insurance, while at the same time making the taxpayers believe that we all make \$100,000.00 a year. We can't open our contract, which was negotiated fairly; ANY changes would nullify the contract which took us 2½ years to ratify, and we will not change one period in that contract until it comes up for renegotiation at the end of 2011. We are going to start giving back to the community, while at the same time raising awareness of what we do everyday for the taxpayers of Westchester, and reinforcing that we are not the reason for high taxes. If you would like to participate in this committee, please contact President Pecora. We are also going to have a contest to come up with a slogan for Unit 9200 which we can use to make CSEA a household name in Westchester. We have to be strong instead of being scared. As a first step, on **Friday, April 23, 2010** we are having a **Lunchtime Labor Walk** in White Plains, not a rally or demonstration, but an event to show your support and solidarity for your fellow CSEA members and to show the county and the public that we are united.

➤ **CSEA Scholarships:**

The deadline for Local 860 scholarships is **April 15, 2010**. Regional and Statewide scholarships are also available. Information is available on our website.

➤ **Holiday Party:**

The Unit 9200 Holiday Party will be held on **Saturday, December 18, 2010** at the Westchester Marriott in Tarrytown.

➤ Playland Family Day:

The Playland Family Day event will be held on **Saturday, June 12, 2010** (rain date Saturday, June 19, 2010). The cost is **\$20.00**, and members can purchase tickets beginning next week in the Unit office, with a limit of 5 tickets per member. Lunch will be served from 12:00 PM to 3:00 PM, and unlimited rides begin at 1:00 PM until park closing.

➤ Local Government Discipline: Representing Members in Interrogations:

A two-part, six-hour free workshop on Representing Members in Interrogations, to educate members on understanding Civil Service Law Section 75 and rights of Union Representatives and employees in disciplinary interrogations, will be held at the Local 860 Office on **Tuesday, April 13, 2010** and **Wednesday, April 14, 2010** from **6:00 PM to 9:00 PM** (includes light dinner at 5:30 PM). Call the Region 3 Office at **(845) 831-1000** to register.

➤ Defensive Driving

A six-hour Defensive Driving classroom course at the Local 860 Office, held on one Saturday or two weeknights. The fee is **\$19.00**. Upcoming classes will be held on **Saturday, May 15, 2010** from **9:00 AM to 3:00 PM** (includes light breakfast at 8:30 AM and light lunch) or **Tuesday, May 18, 2010** and **Wednesday, May 19, 2010** from **6:00 PM to 9:00 PM** (includes light dinner at 5:30 PM). Call **(800) 942-6874** to register.

## Open Forum

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Questions from Members answered by President Pecora:

➤ Is the County considering a change in the health benefits provider from POMCO to NYSHIP or Empire?

The POMCO contract is up this year, and while the County is considering alternate providers based on cost savings they can offer compared to POMCO, each provider needs to be thoroughly investigated not only for cost savings, but also to determine that we will continue to have comparable benefits to what we have now.

➤ Has County Executive met with the union?

President Pecora met with him after he was elected, and he has met briefly with all County unions. Union leaders have been meeting on our own to discuss the common problems we have with the new County Executive, and they have pledged to us that we have their support in our fight to keep the benefits that we have fairly negotiated and to negotiate another fair contract, including the police and fire unions. There are a total of 8 unions in Westchester, two of which are currently in contract negotiations: CSEA, COBA, SOBA, PBA, Nurses, Teamsters, Teachers at WCC, and District Attorney Investigators.

➤ What is the status of the discrepancies in Department closures on the Snow Day in February?

President Pecora has been working on it, while the County Attorney who is handling the issue has been on vacation. As soon as we have a resolution regarding members that did not come in whose Departments were open while other Departments were closed, we will inform the members. Since each Department took different action, it will take some time to resolve this issue centrally with the County Attorneys.

➤ Local 860 President Jack McPhillips addressed the members on voter registration.

Statewide, we used to have 82% of CSEA members registered to vote; however, voter registration is now at 56%. Only 27% of registered voters in Westchester voted in the County Executive election. CSEA needs to work with voter registration this year, to show that CSEA voting strength is significant. Members can help by making sure that their co-workers are registered to vote, and voter registration forms will be available on the Unit 9200 website. A poll of CSEA member's shows that they are saying the same thing as the rest of the public; cut my taxes but leave me whatever I have, and I don't care about the other guy. What will you do to fight for your job?

➤ It's hard to motivate some of the members in some of the departments, because some feel that they are immune to layoffs, such as in the County Clerk's office and the District Attorney's office?

No one should feel that it is not possible for them to be targeted. I commend the members of Unit 9200 because we are not scared now, we're mad at the way we're being treated and portrayed in the media.

