



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

MAY 5, 2010

Karen Pecora – President

Judith Brome – 1st Vice President / Union Representative
Kwabena Manu – 2nd Vice President / Union Representative
James Kelly – 3rd Vice President
Junio I. Alvarado – 4th 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, Labor Relations Specialist Barbara DeSimone, and Aminata Stephens, Vincent Castaldo and Jose 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

Introductions and Remarks

President Pecora thanked all of the CSEA Members, friends of CSEA, County Executive Astorino and his Staff for attending the meeting, introduced the Unit 9200 Executive Board and Local 860, Region 3 and Statewide Officers and Staff in attendance, and made the following statement:

Westchester County workers have been organized since 1947. Today, we are 3800 strong and we intend to grow and expand our membership. We have had a working relationship with each of the previous 6 County Executives, both Republican and Democrat, and we hope to develop a productive working relationship with you, Mr. Astorino. As working men and women and taxpayers in Westchester County, we know that these are tough times. We live, work, shop and pay taxes in this county. We are proud of our work and the services that we provide to Westchester County residents. We also know that we worked hard to negotiate our current agreement with Westchester County including working three years without a raise. We are willing to work with the County Executive to discuss other ways to reduce and minimize costs and to increase revenues, but we will not be opening our contract.

President Pecora introduced several CSEA Members who made statements:

➤ **Juan Sierra, Department of Probation**

Probation Supervisor since 1997. County Employees work very hard, all of us are dedicated civil servants, and we demand respect.

➤ **Peter Snyder, Department of Public Works**

Union member for 45 years. His grandparents and parents were union members since 1947. We are CSEA and we must stand together. If we are divided, we cannot go forward. We are, and we work for, the citizens of Westchester.

➤ **Andrew Swain, Department of Social Services**

Social Services employee since 1991. We must band together and let the County know that we are not opening our contract.

➤ **Sivadasan Nair, County Clerk's Office**

Employee at the Medical Center for 9 years and with the County Clerk's Office for 11 years, with 3 children. We need to fight for our jobs.

➤ **Robert Webb, Department of Social Services**

We work for the children that are the heart and soul of Westchester County. We have fought too hard for what we have to make any givebacks, because we need to protect our families.

Guest Speaker: County Executive Robert Astorino

➤ County Executive Astorino addressed CSEA Members and answered questions from President Pecora:

- We believe that a good working relationship between the County Executive and CSEA is important to successfully move forward. Do you agree that a good working relationship is in the best interest of Westchester County and will you work with us to develop one?

Thank you for allowing me to attend your meeting and address you. Clearly, we are all facing some difficult challenges this year, and it's important to have a two-way dialogue. When I was running for County Executive, I made it a point to meet with union leaders and talk about important issues, and we have been having regular discussions since. I appreciate what you do; I have been to your offices to say hello and thank you for what you do. Unfortunately, I walked into a situation that no one would want to, but I have a job to do, and I ran on the premise that taxes are too high. You are taxpayers, and you know what the situation is like. I'm going to do everything possible to continue the dialog regarding the 166 million dollar deficit. I know that the Board of Legislators disagrees with me on some points, but we have to do things to reduce it, and we can't do little things. We want to start the dialog early with you, as we did at the meeting here on March 9, 2010, rather than have surprises in November. Transparency is vital, and this is why I am bringing this news to the County Employees early. I want to do whatever we can to avoid layoffs and minimize the impact on County Employees.

- We believe that a good working relationship is built on trust and that trust is fostered when both parties show respect by talking directly with the other party. We pledge to not talk about you or your administration or about differences between us in public before bringing those issues up directly to you. Will you pledge to do the same in showing respect for our organization and its leadership?

Yes, I pledge to work with you. The negotiations the County holds with the unions I consider to be private and confidential. I am questioned all the time by the press, and as far as contract negotiations, no, I would not discuss this information with the press, and I would expect the same from CSEA.

- While no one can predict the exact depth of the present revenue problems, we do acknowledge that they exist and that it makes your job and our job difficult during this period. We pledge to look for ways to save the county funds while not damaging the quality of service to the citizens of Westchester County nor the wellbeing of our membership. Will you commit to entertain our ideas and discuss them with us in good faith?

Yes. I think we have already achieved some savings, and many people individually have called or e-mailed me directly with questions and suggestions. You may have ideas, and seemingly, they are terrific. However, what I have to do is look at everything as a whole. I will entertain any idea and forward them to the finance, budget and law departments. Some of them are very good and others are not. If you have ideas, please pass them on.

- In these tough economic times, are you aware of 54 new employees hired since January 1st, including 14 non-represented employees that are working on the 9th floor? Also, will the proposed layoffs include these 54 new employees, other employees, or only the CSEA members?

Clearly, there are 3800 CSEA Members, and the percentage of total workers who are CSEA Members is very high. My hope is to change the way we do things in the departments, to cut overtime and create savings, which can ultimately avoid layoffs. All of these decisions are difficult, but we are trying to save the system and figure out ways to reduce costs. Eliminating the New York City Express bus line was one part of that plan, but there are many other things that need to be done.

- Are you going to lead by example? We have not heard or seen any indication of any cuts from the administration to "share" the burden of the proposed deficit. We have heard more than once that we "must be a part of the solution", but it seems as if we are the ONLY part of the solution.

My office is half-empty; we have 24 people working in our office, 14 less than when I came into office. We are working much harder with a lot less resources. The health care contributions and sick leave buyout limits for non-represented employees are us leading by example. I cannot ask you to do something that I would not do myself. March 9, 2010, the day of my meeting here with all County Employees, was not a fun day for me; no one wants to stand in front of an audience of people you work with every day and have to give them bad news. I felt very good when many people came up to me after the meeting and thanked me for speaking to them. I wish I could say everything is going to be ok, but it isn't. The deficit means a very long road ahead for us. In the interest of honesty and transparency, at some point you're going to have to make a decision, it's not going to be an easy one, and everyone will have to be accountable. We understand that we're in a very bad situation, and we've had to shift our thinking from ME to WE. At the end of the day, there is a deficit, and I know that no one wants to pay for health care, open their contract, or lose their job, but there may be no other way out, and that's a decision you're going to have to make. Laying off employees is the last thing I want to do, but I am giving you the choice. Layoffs of 800 are a possibility, and I'm coming to you because I'm going to need your help. If the

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answer to all of these cost saving measures is no, and everything stays the same, then I will have no choice but to have to consider layoffs. We are going to have to make these tough decisions before November. We are considering a separation incentive, to encourage as many employees to retire as possible, which will reduce the ultimate number of employees that would need to be laid off. I've met with the County Executives of other counties, and they are in the same position that we are, they have no money, and they are also considering layoffs. My door is open, and I will consider any suggestions you have, but I ask you to please work with us.

President Pecora stated to County Executive Astorino that we will be forwarding him more suggestions for cost savings from our Members. However, we are insulted that while at the same time you're talking about laying off hundreds of CSEA Members, 14 people on the ninth floor, and 50 people total, have been hired since January; there are dozens of outside consultants working year-round in the County making \$100,000.00 a year and doing jobs that CSEA Members should be doing; and that you're saying that we make \$100,000.00 a year, which is not true. Also, CSEA needs to be kept informed about the proposal for the new health care plan with NYSHIP, and any other changes that will affect our Members.

County Executive Astorino responded that we will do whatever we need to, because we are not going to continue to pay what we're paying today. We are doing everything possible to find savings. Let's be honest, we came in January with our own people, and you shouldn't take the position that we shouldn't have the people we need to work.

In closing, President Pecora stated to the Members that while we hope to continue to work with County Executive Astorino, WE ARE STANDING TOGETHER, WE WILL NOT BE OPENING UP OUR CONTRACT, AND WE WILL DO WHATEVER IS NECESSARY TO MAKE SURE THAT NONE OF US LOSE OUR JOBS.

Open Forum

Questions from Members answered by President Pecora:

➤ What is the timeline for the Retirement/Separation Incentive?

The County is considering a separation incentive for employees with a minimum of 10 years of service, of \$1,000.00 per year of service, up to a total of \$30,000.00, but with no additional service time, which has not been approved yet.

The Governor is also considering retirement system incentive which also still needs to be approved, for employees over 55 years of age with 25 years of service, which may include additional service time. In the event that this incentive is passed, the County Executive will pull back their incentive (which is due to be voted on by the Board of Legislators on May 10, 2010) in favor of the state incentive.

➤ Member Statement

What I heard here tonight was the same line of baloney we've heard before, and no one should fall for it. Asking us to give back the 4% raises we fought for 3 years to get, when he's giving his staffers \$18,000.00 raises - there's something wrong with that.

➤ We may be 3800 members and a majority of the County workforce, but why are we carrying the whole burden of the budget deficit?

Our argument from the beginning has been that we are not the only solution.

➤ There was a recent decision in California regarding employees being asked to give back their raises, where the judge upheld the union contract.

Once we allow one give back, it opens up our entire contract, which makes the whole thing worthless, and we can't and won't do it.

➤ The County Executive keeps telling us there's a 166 million dollar deficit, but Board Chairman Jenkins says that number is bogus.

He's protecting his original projections, which don't even include his own savings projections.

➤ If there is supposed to be a hiring freeze, but they still continue to hire more people – why are they talking about laying off workers?

CSEA has the same argument.

- What the County Executive is saying when he talks about the taxpayers is insulting to us on a personal level - WE'RE TAXPAYERS!

We'll talk at the end of 2011 when our contract expires.

- What is the county Executive doing to make Westchester County more attractive to businesses to bring in more tax revenue?

This is part of what we're suggesting, to look for other revenue sources.

- The County Executive is asking us for concessions – I would like to know what the true deficit number is, and to have the opportunity to analyze the numbers.

We don't know at this point what the true numbers are, and we would like to have that opportunity as well.

NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO BE EMBARRASSED TO BE A CSEA MEMBER, OR TO BE AFRAID OF MANAGEMENT. NOW IS THE TIME TO STAND UP TOGETHER AND FIGHT TO KEEP OUR CONTRACT SECURE. NOW IS THE TIME TO BE UNITED AS CSEA MEMBERS!

Officer's Reports

No Officer's Reports.

Next Meeting Date

- Next Open Monthly Member Meeting:
 - Date: [TUESDAY, JUNE 1, 2010](#)
 - Location: ****To Be Determined****
 - Time: 5:30 PM Light Dinner / 6:00 PM Meeting

Adjournment

- Meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Gotzen

Kimberly Gotzen
Secretary / Chair, Communications Committee / Shop Steward & Grievance Representative, Unit 9200

Handouts / Attachments

- No Handouts

Unit 9200 Office

- The Unit 9200 Office is located at [112 East Post Road, 4th Floor, Room 428, in White Plains](#). Contact us by Telephone at [\(914\) 995-2151](tel:9149952151), by Fax at [\(914\) 995-5629](tel:9149955629), by E-mail at csea9200@westchestergov.com, or visit our Website at www.CSEA9200.com.