



PCT PLEDGE

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GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

By PCT President Morty Rosenfeld

Next week's meetings of the Teacher and Clerical Bargaining Units are important events in the life of our union. While I can understand the difficulty some have staying after work to attend, I can't emphasize enough how important such meetings are to the negotiations process.

At your unit's meeting, you will be presented with the negotiating demands that members submitted on the Demand Questionnaires that were circulated and which we then worked on by the PCT Executive Board which is recommending them to you. You, however, in our democratic process have the final say at your unit's general membership meeting.

**CLERICAL UNIT MEETING
TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2015
4:15 P.M., MATTLIN M.S. LIBRARY**

**TEACHER UNIT MEETING
THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2015
4 P.M. STRATFORD RD. AUDITORIUM**

At your meeting, we will go over the demands, answering any questions you may have. At that time, should you wish to change something in the package either by adding something, taking out or substituting something completely different, you will be able to make a motion to do so. If there is a second to your motion, you will have a opportunity to debate your item with a vote of the membership following the debate.

Participation in your unit's general membership meeting begins your participation in the negotiations process, a process you must be thoroughly engaged in if we are to be successful.

It is essential that you understand what your Negotiating Committee will be trying to accomplish for you so that when they call upon you to participate in activities in support of their efforts, you will know exactly why they need your assistance.

No one really wants to go to meetings after a long hard day at work. But success in negotiations is often determined by our solidarity, and we begin to demonstrate that solidarity at our general membership meetings. I look forward to seeing you there. Those attending the Teacher Unit

meeting, may want to consider car pooling to avoid parking issues.

BACKGROUND TO NEGOTIATIONS

Let's start with the good news. This round of negotiations will take place in a much better economic climate than the last which took place during the worst recession since the Great Depression. Unemployment is down, tax revenues are up and the mood of the public is much improved. Even better yet, with the resurgence of the stock market, both the Teacher and Employee Pension Systems are doing much better thereby requiring the district to pay some 2 million dollars less in retirement payments than last year. That said, we still have the insidious tax cap to deal with limiting increases to 2 percent or the rate of inflation whichever is lower unless a larger increase is supported by 60 percent of the voters. That cap is just one of the many gifts we have gotten from Governor Andrew Cuomo.

Angry Andy, peeked that NYSUT failed to support his bid for re-election has declared unconditional war on us. In case you haven't followed his latest proposals for what he maintains are failing schools, here's a brief summary of his shameless goals.

Having just a few years ago negotiated the current APPR rules with NYSUT, districts having negotiated plans pursuant to those rules, the State Education Department having scrutinized each plan and ultimately approved each, the Governor now says the APPR is not working because too many teachers are receiving ratings of effective and highly effective. How he asks can only 1 percent or so of the state's teachers be ineffective if so many more students are not graduating from high school, any student's failing apparently being directly related to the effectiveness of his teacher. The word poverty never enters his discussion, even though over half of New York's students qualify for the federal lunch program. Here's what Angry Andy wants now.

- 1- Base 50 percent of a teacher's rating on student results on state assessments.
- 2-Base another 35 percent of the rating on the findings of an outside observer.
- 3-Base the final 15 percent of the rating on the observation of the local administrators.

Think about this! The public elects a board of education. They hire an administration to supervise the teachers in their employ, but the state of New York gets to contribute 85 percent of the evaluation of those employees. Get two "ineffective" ratings in a row and get fired. Think we have teaching to the test and test prep coming out of the ears of our students, think about what our colleagues will be forced to do if the Governor gets his way. And he's being evilly clever about getting his way.

School districts across the state are preparing their budgets now. Always a politically difficult process, Cuomo has made it crazy by refusing to say what his state aid numbers will be until the legislature gives him his education reforms. So districts are building

their budget without knowing how much money they will be receiving from the state. That's terrible in a place like Plainview. It's a complete disaster in places where more of the local budget comes from state aid.

Not content with damning his own APPR plan, the Governor also wants to change the tenure law to extend the probationary period to five years from its current three. Unlike his other proposals, polls seem to indicate that this one has some traction with the public. That's not surprising given that the public has been given the completely erroneous perception that tenure is a guarantee of lifetime employment. How do we explain to the public that most districts get rid of teachers they don't wish to employ after two years under the current system. A five year probationary period will therefore accomplish nothing except a few more arbitrary teacher firings.

If we don't do politics, the politicians will do us. If there ever was a time to push back, it's now. I urge every member to:

1- If you have children in elementary or middle school, opt them out of the state assessments. That's the most likely way to crash the whole APPR system. How can we ethically preach about the evils of high stakes testing if we send our own children to take the tests.

2- Contact your state Assembly person and Senator. Use the PCT webpage (pobct.org) to help you find them. Tell them if they support Cuomo's education plan, you will not support them.

3- Sign on to the NYSUT MAC APP, an app that gets you legislative alerts and allows you to send emails and faxes in support of NYSUT positions from your smart phone in seconds. I've asked your Head SRC Reps to encourage you to install the app on your phone. They can help you with this. It's really not hard. You can find it in Play Store on android phones and Apple Store for the iPhone.

4- Plan on attending NYSUT's Nassau County Forum on March 12th from 7:00 to 9:00 P.M. at Westbury Senior High School, 1 Post Ave., Old Westbury.

5 - Read my blog at pobct.org. I write almost every day trying to make sense of the increasingly crazy world of public education.

6- Follow the PCT Facebook page and share postings with your friends. My personal Facebook page is largely devoted to education issues as well.

We are engaged in a battle to save public education and the teaching profession. To win that battle, we have to be informed, organized and mobilized.

HEALTH BUY-BACK UPDATE

Although the PCT was victorious at the New York State Supreme Court in Albany and in a companion legal action at PERB, the State of New York decided to appeal our decision to the Appellate Division. More disturbing to those who have been waiting for their money, the State has now asked for and received a second extension of time to complete their paper work. They now have until March 13 to submit their papers.

That probably means that if we are lucky we will have a decision by the Appellate Division by the end of the school year. Keep in mind however that if we should lose, we will go to the Court of Appeals as will the State in all probability. Justice is severely delayed in New York State.

RETIREMENT WORKSHOP

PCT President Morty Rosenfeld will conduct this year's retirement workshop for members of the Teacher and Clerical units of our union on Wednesday, April 15, 2015 at 4:15 P.M. in Room 191 of JFK High School.

Members thinking of retiring this year are encouraged to have a consultation with their respective retirement system before coming to the workshop where the focus will be on district matters relating to retirement.

MIDDLE SCHOOLS/K-CENTER

A year and a half ago, in response to a highly exaggerated claim of inequities for students between our two middle schools, the PCT agreed to serve on a committee with parents and administrators to address the issue. The committee adopted with slight modification a plan proposed by the principals that attempted to correct this problem to the extent possible. That plan was put in place this year. Yet, without any attempt to study its success, the superintendent added to the agenda of the same committee a discussion of the closing of our Kindergarten Center. If anyone had any doubt about Dr. Lewis' intention, it has now been made manifestly clear.

Before the Board of Education is a two part proposal to place the two middle schools on the same time schedule next year at a cost of \$107,000 and changing hours throughout the district. The second part is the closing of the K-Center the next year, the children to be sent to their so-called home schools that will then be clearly over crowded.

On Monday night Vice President Nina Melzer and members of the staff of the K-Center spoke to the Board about their concerns and their bad treatment by the administration from the time they arrived here.

The plan that has been put before the Board is not supportable by the PCT. It will negatively impact K-Center jobs And the conditions of all elementary members.