



## MTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING FRIDAY/SATURDAY NOV 30-DEC 1, 2007

The MTA Board met recently in Natick. Selected highlights of the meeting which may be of interest to MCCC members follow.

The new **Chair of the Board of Education, Paul Reville**, was an invited guest. He spoke at length and took questions from the board for some time.

Dr. Reville is on the faculty at Harvard University and runs the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy there. He was instrumental in fostering and implementing the ed reform of the mid-90's that brought the MCAS test but also greatly increased state funding for our K-12 schools.

He started many years ago as a Vista teacher and youth worker in Somerville, where he became convinced we can do better for our children, and committed himself to doing that. His children went through the Worcester public schools. He thus has a good understanding of our urban public schools.

Appointed in September by Gov. Patrick to chair the BoE, this is the second time he was appointed to this Board.

Paul would like to revive the spirit of collaboration with the MTA and all constituencies. He doesn't want reform to be done "to" us, but "with" us. The MTA, among others, needs to "be at the table." The caveat is twofold: First, he feels a sense of urgency that ed reform has not achieved the goals it has around the achievement gap. He regrets that economic status is still the single best predictor of success in school. Second, people at the table need to be constructive, not obstructive. Change is here to stay, assessment is here to stay, accountability is here to

You may know that **Ed Sullivan**, 25+ year Executive Director / Treasurer of the MTA, is retiring and will be gone as of mid-February. Everyone wishes Ed a wonderful, well-earned retirement. Meanwhile the MTA is going through a detailed process to hire Ed's

stay. So the question is about the shape of these things, not about their existence.

His spoke of three goals he has.

First, close the achievement gap. Do something about removing socio-economic status as the weak link in one's success in school. This is a daunting task, not achievable by a classroom teacher alone without more resources. He wants strategies to achieve this goal.

Second, get more support for urban schools. The problem is bigger than the current treatment. He noted that schools can't always offer enough science and math to challenge their students. These schools, especially, simply need more support than they currently have to educate all students to a high level.

Third, he wants the BoE to be more service oriented. He acknowledged it is grossly understaffed, but said the BoD is needed to achieve the promise of the ed reform movement in Massachusetts.

The Chair seems to believe in increased learning time, at least for those who are in underachieving environments. He acknowledged that there is clearly a narrowing of curriculum (i.e. teaching to the test) and does not view that as positive. However he would say the fix is not to throw out the current programs designed to empower students in math, science and the language arts. He would like us to "do for all children what we would do for our own children."

Paul acknowledged that funding in the Commonwealth is extremely limited for the foreseeable future, and this will put a big damper on any plans the BoE has.

replacement. This may take a while, as this is a very, very important job. In the meantime **Tim Fitzgerald**, MCCC's first president, will be appointed as the interim director! Tim taught mathematics with his illustrious brother and current Day Grievance Coordinator Dennis Fitzgerald at

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Massasoit Com Clg in the 1970s. Tim went on to lead the MCCC, then worked for the NEA as a field representative, and in fact is currently employed by the NEA. He has an extensive background in labor work, including experience as an arbitrator, field organizer, internal organizer, for the MTA, NEA, and the Maine Educator's Association.

Many MTA associations are **transferring their health insurance coverage to the GIC** (what we in higher ed have always had). This is the result of laws passed in the last few years that permit and encourage cities and towns to do this. Because our K-12 association cousins have always been able to negotiate over every bit of their health insurance benefits (unlike higher ed which has no power to bargain this), there have been some concerns over this program.

**Richard Sanders**, Director of Affiliate Services, updated the board on negotiations and training around the state. A list of two dozen cities and towns are in difficult negotiations, with mediation and arbitration a common theme. The MTA's Strategic Direction efforts continue through regional training and retreats with locals.

The Board discussed a **possible ballot initiative** to eliminate the state income tax. Sponsored by the libertarian and failed gubernatorial candidate Carla Howell, this is yet another attempt to strangle good government. This initiative would bring our Commonwealth to its knees and disrupt progress for an indefinite period. This would not be a nice place to live, especially but not only if you are employed by the state. The MTA will take the lead in challenging signatures on the petition.

**Kathy Skinner** of the MTA noted there is a real change in attitude in the Department of Education. The schools in one town near Boston were cited as an example. They are in crisis and poorly performing. In the past, the teachers in those schools would simply

have been blamed by the DoE, and the fix cited as wholesale staff changes. Now, it is recognized that there are good people working hard there, but they simply do not have the resources to achieve the goals that everyone wants.

**Jo Blum** of MTA Governmental noted that there may be a \$1.3 Billion (yes, with a "B") shortfall in next year's state budget. Job growth is 49th in the U.S., only ahead of Michigan, and lottery money used for cities and towns is down \$250 million dollars (and that shortfall has to come from the general fund). And of course the legislature is afraid to talk about revenue enhancement, or even closing tax loopholes that even Romney supported. Ed Sullivan noted the outstanding job Jo has done for our members over the years.



The UMass higher ed directors talked extensively about getting their **one-year extensions funded**. The Governor and A&F turned the contracts in to the legislature in a timely, even exemplary, fashion, but the legislature is in informal session, making everything problematic. (Does this sound familiar to you?)

There will be a **February 12th lobby day**, to include "virtual lobbying", on raising the base amount for retiree COLA increases from the current \$12,000, where it has been for a decade or more, to \$16,000. Give a typical 3% COLA adjustment on this additional \$4,000, a retiree would see an additional \$120 per year increase. That should keep them warm in the winter...

**President Anne Wass** talked about the great job John Kerry did for us on the recent **GPO/WEP** hearing in Washington, ensuring that one of the two outside speakers was one of ours. As **MCCC Vice president Donnie McGee** had reported to our membership "Excellent testimony was provided by MTA retired English teacher, Peggy Kane, a widow whose family was unable to collect a penny of her husband's 30+ years of Social Security earnings when he died at age 53." Anne noted that Donnie was invited by the MTA to attend the hearing and that she was very active walking the halls of congress.

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Respectfully Submitted

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MTA Directors for the MCCC