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REPORT

MTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

FRIDAY/SATURDAY OCTOBER 17-18, 2008

The MTA Board met recently in Natick Friday evening and all day Saturday. At every meeting the Board receives more than a score of reports on a variety of things related to the functioning of the organization and initiatives and projects of the organization, as well as extensive discussion and resolution of business items. This meeting was no exception. We select those items that might be of the most interest to MCCC members, with some commentary and opinion from your directors.

Donnie joined the MTA Board at its August meeting at Williamstown.

There was a long report on “MasTells”, a survey of K-12 teachers and principals in Massachusetts. It surveyed things like whether teachers feel like they are part of the decision making in their schools, viewed by teachers and by principals. Some of the results were shared with the Board, and will be available to the public in December. We will note that tardiness and poor attendance are widely viewed as problematic.

The recently completed audit of the MTA was presented by the auditors. It was a very clean audit, and the Board thanked Kathy Conway, Director of Finance and Accounting, and her staff, for a job very well done.

There was a lot of talk about “Readiness Schools,” the Governor’s version of charter schools. Both of these kinds of schools are threats to the ability of our K-12 colleagues to do their jobs in our public schools.

Question 1 dominated much of the meeting. It was noted here, and we have seen it elsewhere, that Facebook and My Space are used by students to talk to each other about political issues. One UMass student said she’d vote against Question 1 and had just asked 1,000 of her “friends” in My Space to vote against it.

Of course the MTA was working very hard on this across the state, and Donnie shared with the board a matrix of the activities that our 15 chapters were doing on Question 1. It was very impressive!

Tom Parsons, former MCCC President, was applauded as he stepped down from chairing the MTA’s Retirement Plan Committee. This committee has come a long way under Tom’s leadership, including helping the MTA to meet the raised expectations for pension funds in the last few years. Phil has been a member of this MTA Committee for the last 3 or so years.

Watched a very interesting YouTube video called “Shift Happens.” Search on those words and watch it. For example in 10 years, the country with the most speakers of English will be ... China. People are putting K-12 courses online. Technology is being used more and more to teach. Phil shared something that many two-year college math teachers have said, they need to be more a “Guide on the Side” than a “Sage



on the Stage.” (Actually though I (Phil) feels that we need to be a Sage on the Side). Currently the lack of technology is slowing down this shift at all levels, but that may well change soon. Teachers today need to know what is a blog, texting, myspace and youtube.

It was noted that at Williamstown last summer there were 225 first-timers, a record.

Health benefits: It was noted that although the Governor recently was not successful in raising our health benefit contributions, he did cut \$31,000,000 from the GIC (Group Insurance Commission) budget. He had expected most of that to come from our increased share of the benefits from 15% to 25% for most of us. This may look like a 10% increase, but 10% is 67% of the 15% most of us pay now. Thus it is a 67% increase, not a 10% increase for you. And since a family plan for the commonwealth costs about \$14,000 or so a year, 10% of that is \$1,400 a year out of our pockets. It remains to be seen how the \$31,000,000 cut will be paid for - a renewed effort to increase our contributions, higher deductibles and co-pays... .

Heard a report on MTA legislative priorities for the upcoming year by C.J. O’Donnel, Chair, Government Relations Committee. C.J. is the current president of MSCA (state colleges’ union). The priorities continue to include improving creditable service for sabbatical leaves, health insurance for part-time higher education faculty, and simplifying the process for submitting bargained higher ed contracts to the legislature for funding. Also, Donnie submitted, and the committee and Board recommended, legislation to provide a one-time window for faculty and administrators currently enrolled in the state’s ORP (optional retirement program) to transfer into the state SERS system.

Joanne Blum (Director, Division of Governmental Services), gave a legislative and political update. Of particular note is that “the 2008 Democratic National Platform includes language calling for the elimination of the Social Security offsets. NEA leaders and staff served on the platform committee and were able to push the committee to include in the platform language reading, “We will end the penalty within the current Social Security system for public service that exists in several states.””

MTA’s new Executive Director-Treasurer, David A. Borer, reported, and in particular he noted that higher ed negotiations are under attack. Most of the higher ed unions have been without a contract since last July, and have yet to see a firm offer on compensation. In fact, an offer in the 2.5% range proved ephemeral, and now seems to be in fiscal limbo. Thus these negotiations are stalled at this time.

Each MTA Board member signed an annual statement confirming compliance with the provisions of MTA’s Financial Conflict of Interest Policy for MTA Officials.

Respectfully Submitted

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MTA Directors for the MCCC