

Maryland Retired School Personnel Association
Legislative Committee Meeting
Tuesday, August 30, 2016

Welcome

Legislative Committee Chair Virginia Crespo called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m, and welcomed everyone, including four new members. Each person introduced their self and identified the county they were representing.

Attendance

Members in attendance: Chair Virginia Crespo, (new member) Elizabeth Barbe, Bill Brown, (new member) Elaine DiAiso, Charles Gable, Shirley Hicks, (new member) Vice-President Lorraine Johnson, LeeAnn Kaye, MRSPA President Fay Miller, Bill Price, Tish Raff, Ron Ruffo, Harold Siskind, Steve Strobeck, (new member) MRSPA Legislative Aide Dr. Vera Torrence, (new member) MRSPA Executive Director Shachar Weizman, and Jannette Wundrow.

We missed: Mary Hughee, Dr. Ken Muir, Tom Owen, and Gene Streagle.

Dr. Vera Torrence, our new Legislative Aide, was introduced to the Committee by Chair Virginia Crespo. Dr. Torrence has an extensive background in education in Montgomery County as a classroom math teacher, a District Math Supervisor, and a school principal. She has taught at Hood College and Johns Hopkins University, She is the National Director of Curriculum and Assessment at “New Leaders” a national non-profit organization that supports educators. She lives in Annapolis. We welcome Dr. Vera Torrence as our MRSPA Legislative Aide!

Shachar Weizman, our new Executive Director, was introduced by President Faye Miller. He is new to the field of public education, but is willing to learn and support the goals of MRSPA. He came on board in June, worked a bit with Judith Zahren, met with several committee chairs, and attended the ASRTE Meeting of state executive directors in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Shachar brings a very valuable skill to our organization, as he is adept at working with computers, programing and setting up websites. Because of this expertise, MRSPA plans to drop the costly contract that has been in place for the past several years with Albertson Consulting Company, in favor of Shachar organizing and setting up a more functional website that should be operational in October.

Minutes

The minutes of the March 29, 2016 meeting were approved as printed.

Discussions

(1) Review Legislative Priorities brochure revisions

Under the “Quality of Life”, delete the words “to stay” and insert “remain”.

Under “Safety”, add an s to “practice”; delete the word “approaches” - phrase will read “identify best practices in an effort to ...”

LeeAnn made a motion and Harold seconded that the brochure be printed as revised. The motion passed.

President Miller questioned how the brochure is distributed. She suggested that copies should be made available to all of our MRSPA members. Presently, the brochures, along with a letter from MRSPA explaining our priority goals, are hand-delivered to every state Senator and Delegate in January. The brochures are given out at Leadership and Workshop meetings. They are taken to scheduled visits at local meetings by the MRSPA President. Charles suggested that the brochure topics could be printed in local newsletters. Harold suggested that the entire brochure could be printed on a single page (back and front) and inserted in each local newsletter. Shachar suggested that the entire brochure could be printed on our MRSPA website.

(2) Set Meeting Calendar

The MRSPA Legislative Workshop will be held on **November 10, 2016** at 9:00 a.m. in the Miller Senate Building, Annapolis. All Legislative Committee members, local Presidents, and Legislative Chairs are encouraged to attend.

Committee meeting dates:

January 17 & 31 - February 14 & 28 - March 14 & 28

* conference calls may be held during inclement weather.

(3) November Legislative Workshop Agenda

Virginia included a copy of the Legislative Workshop agenda in the packet of information received today. Most of the proposed speakers are already confirmed. Registration will begin at 9:00 a.m., with the meeting starting at 9:30 a.m. The program should conclude by 2:15p.m.

(4) Health Survey Update

It was decided that there will not be a Health Survey conducted at this time. We have done them in the past under the direction of Ken Muir and LeeAnn Kaye, and they were very time-consuming. Few changes were made by the counties afterward, when they received our completed work. Health care is different in each county. It is important that all MRSPA members keep an eye on their Boards of Education when they are discussing health care for retirees, and give input when necessary.

(5) Likely Issues for 2017 Session

This is the first year that counties are NOT getting help with pension funding. State money has also been cut for county education budgets. Our main MRSPA goal is to protect our state's Defined Benefit pension plan. Governor Hogan is proposing that ALL counties begin their school year after Labor Day. This is sure to be opposed by the counties, as it will mean starting school a few weeks later, and ending later in June. Each county has holidays built into their calendar that are specific to their area.

We are all concerned that Governor Hogan supported the BOAST Bill (giving monetary support to private schools) last year. Also, the majority of the Maryland Board of Education members are now appointees of Governor Hogan; several of them support Charter Schools.

(6) Pension Update

Shachar distributed and explained points on a paper with headings about "U.S. State Public Pensions", "Funding for Public Pensions", "Underfunded State Pension System Will Be a Challenge for Hogan Team", and a map showing state by state U.S. public pension funding levels. *This is very worthwhile reading! Shachar shared that Kentucky recently decided to no longer fund their state retirement pension system! Fortunately, there was an enormous

amount of protest from retirees and workers across the state, to reverse this decision for at least four years.

We must all remain vigilant about our pension funding! Theresa Lochte, our retiree representative on the Maryland State Retirement Pension System (MSRPS) Board, is interested in putting something about pensions on our MRSPA website monthly. Presently our MSRPS is funded at 69%, with a future target of 80% funding.

Bill Brown, a former MSRPS Board member, noted that MSRPS has made major reforms. The object of reform after 2008, was to diversify, so losses of pension money would not be dramatic. Maryland may not be making big gains, but the funding level is steadily improving, and will avoid big drops in funds. Bill pointed out that the Arnold Foundation opposes Defined Benefit pensions, saying the states can no longer afford them. New hires are encouraged to set up their own 401K retirement plans. Governor Hogan added \$75 million to MSRPS last year. There is a concern about the amount of money the state pays to money managers.

Liaison Reports

NRTA – No report

United Seniors of Maryland - Virginia reported that the next meeting of USM will be on September 19, 2016

AARP Maryland - Jannette reported that AARP Maryland is a sponsor of the National Library of Congress Book Festival to be held at the Convention Center in Washington on September 24, 2016. She will be volunteering with that event.

New Business

Ron Ruffo would like to see all of our MRSPA members contact their legislators more often.

Announcements

Plan to attend the MRSPA Legislative Workshop on November 10, 2016 in Annapolis!

Our next meeting will be held on January 17, 2017 at the Odenton MRSPA Office.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Submitted by Jannette Wundrow