

Williamstown Higher Ed "Town Meeting"

Excerpted from report by Phil Mahler

On Wednesday, August 9th, at the MTA's Annual Summer Leadership Conference in Williamstown, Massachusetts, numerous representatives of MCCC, MSCA, and MTA leadership, met with BHE Chair Stephen Tocco, (newly appointed) Chancellor Judy Gill, and BHE Board member Aaron D. Spencer (the owner of Pizzeria Uno) in what was termed a "Town meeting" forms to discuss pending issues. This meeting occurs annually at the Williamstown gathering, and has a relatively relaxed and freewheeling flow. The format is regarded as an important annual opportunity to meet the employer on more level ground, and for both sides to assess one another in a setting different than Boston meeting rooms.

Jay McHale, Salem State College and current HELC Chair ran the meeting. In opening remarks Chancellor Gill said that she wants good relations with the MTA both while, and outside of, contract negotiations.

Board of Higher Education Chair, Stephen Tocco was the main speaker. He opened saying, during his first three months of office last Fall, his impressions of Massachusetts public higher education were that it is dysfunctional. He said the public higher education system is an ignored "jewel" of the Commonwealth, and he wants it to get the public respect it deserves.

He stated that Chancellor Gill was chosen partly because of all the 70-odd candidates, only she had a real "passion" for this job. It is a plus that she is a product of the Mass public higher education system.

He mentioned that the BHE would be creating a "trustee academy" for new college trustees.

Chairman Toc declared he is upset the community college collective bargaining agreement was not fully funded in the regular legislative session. He said "we'll get it done soon" and "it should have already been done". In regard to the state college contract, he said he hopes "good things can happen." but that post tenure review must be part of the ultimate contract.

He spoke of his interest in technology. There are important decisions to be made

about how much, which, and effective use of technology. There is a task force looking at it, with higher education representation.

He feels that campus infrastructure needs to be looked at, and that sports is an important part of an undergraduate experience.

He says he has enjoyed working with the MTA staff, praised their able representation of their memberships.

In the question period that followed there were some more questions about the state college contract situation and a lot of talk about teacher preparation in the state colleges.

Abe Sherf commented we should start negotiations before contracts expire. Perhaps six months before and get it done in a respectful manner. Chancellor Gill stated that the BHE also wants to work with the unions before the expiration of contracts.

Board member Aaron Spencer talked about the BHE task force on technology, which he has chaired. He also said that he was pleasantly surprised by the reasonable, polite discussion which occurred and stated that he thought perhaps this could be an annual event, and that it might even persuade him to accept reappointment to the Board when his term expires soon.

MCCC members, and MTA leaders, in attendance at this were Joe Murphy (BrCC), George Gaudette (HCC), Tom Parsons (MBCC), Jane Roman (BHCC), Geri Curley (BHCC), Dan Donahue (MTA), Cathy Boudreau (MaCC and MTA Vice President), Bob Nunes (MBCC), Chris Hoeth (BrCC), Dennis Fitzgerald (MaCC and MCCC Day Grievance Coordinator), Abe Sherf (NSCC), Philip Mahler (MxCC and MCCC President), Dan Fitzgerald (HCC), Tom Salvo (NECC), Phyllis Barrett (HCC and MCCC Secretary), Priscilla Lyons (MTA Higher Ed Director), Paulette Howarth (BrCC), Ed Sullivan (MTA Executive Director), Steve Gorrie (MTA President).

Dennis Fitzgerald represented the MCCC in preparations for the Higher Education reception. It's an event that many attendees (K-12 and higher ed) eagerly anticipate every year.

New Rates for Retiree Dental

On April 7, 1986, the U.S. Congress enacted Public Law 99-272, commonly referred to as COBRA, 42 U.S.C. sections 300bb-1-300bb-8. The statute says that employees are required to give employees the option of continuing in certain employee benefit programs in instances when the employee's coverage would otherwise terminate. Coverage is interim, from 18-30 months depending on the situation of the individual.

The situations covered under the law are extensive and numerous. They include termination (for other than gross misconduct), reduction in hours below the level needed to qualify for a benefit, divorce, death of participating spouse, and retirement. Coverage for an incapacitated child may be continued past the age a child would cease participation.

For those who retire before 65, the coverage would be 18 months. For those who retire at or after 65, coverage would last 30 months.

A non-unit dental care plan is through Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, and administered by McKenzie and Company is sponsored by the Board of Higher Education non-unit Employee Health and Welfare Fund. Retirees may be covered by this plan.

The employer's personnel office will notify the Plan administrator when an individual retires. In other changes in status, like a divorce, the employee is responsible to notify the Plan Administrator. New rates, effective August 1, 2000 for this coverage are presented in a chart elsewhere in this issue.

MCCC members with concerns should contact McKenzie and Company at P.O. Box 6239 JFK Station, Boston, MA (617) 723-7332, (800) 295-9516. ■



MBCCC President Lindsey Norman and Professor Nancy Morello

Morello Recipient of MBCC Distinguished Achievement Award

Professor Nancy Morello, currently of the MCCC Executive Committee, was awarded the first ever Mass. Bay Distinguished Achievement award at that college May 19, 2000. Ms. Morello was also a past MCCC Director, and chapter president at Mass. Bay Community College. The award is determined by a committee consisting of an AFSME person, a faculty, a professional staff, a non-unit administrator, a student and the Director of Human Resources at that college. MBCC President Lindsey Norman initiator of the awards program, presented the awards.

Ms. Morello is a Professor of Biology/Microbiology. Her union activity increased about eight years ago when she became chapter secretary, then vice president, and ultimately president of the Mass Bay chapter. She has served on the Board of the MCCC for the last 4 years, and in 1999 became an at-large member of the MCCC Executive Committee.

The innovative Teachers' Center at Massachusetts Bay Community College was designed and implemented during her tenure as chapter president. The Teachers' Center has received national attention, and \$20,000 in grant resources from the National Educational Association and the Massachusetts Teachers' Association.

The award "recognizes an employee who has consistently advanced the goals of

the College and who has been an exemplary role model for staff and students alike in terms of citizenship, integrity, industry, etc." according to the award criteria. Twelve employees were nominated in the category. The award included a "personal engraved plaque," name engraved on a permanent college plaque in the auditorium, reserved parking for academic year 2001, and a \$100 gift certificate. The award was presented at a ceremony at the First Annual Employee Recognition Day and Celebration at the Wellesley campus cafeteria. The event was an up-scale reception with food and beverages.

Other awards presented at the fete included the Extra Mile Award, given to an individual or group who consistently demonstrated initiative in the President's 5-Cs; cooperation, collaboration, civility, communication, and collegiality. This was awarded to MCCC unit member Vernice Sahely, the College Nurse at the Wellesley Campus. The "Great Ideas at Work" award recognizing an employee who has made a suggestion which will result in improved productivity, effectiveness or service was awarded to another unit member, Joyce Still, of the Surgical Technology program. Additionally, employees with 10, 20, or 30 years of creditable service were recognized with awards appropriate to years of service. ■

Get Involved

Leadership Journey Recruiting

The MTA's Leadership Journey program will be starting its second cycle in October. The Leadership Journey is a leadership training program for emerging and established local leadership. It's theme is "Building Stronger Locals." The program likes to recruit a minimum of six members from a local. It might be a good idea to notify your chapter's president if you have an interest, in order to form up a local group. The commitment is for four sessions, each consisting of a Friday evening and Saturday. Interested parties should contact Beverly Eisman at the MTA 1-800-392-6175.

MCCC Williamstown Committee

MCCC leadership would like to form a committee to increase MCCC visibility and participation at the MTA Williamstown, Massachusetts Summer Leadership Conference next August, 2001- and beyond. Contact MCCC Vice President Rick Doud if you are interested.

MTA/MCCC Relations Committee

Another committee being formed is charged with looking at MCCC relations with the MTA. This committee will first research what services are being received from the MTA, then will report out to the executive committee and the membership recommendations about how the MCCC can better use the services the MTA has available. Contact MCCC President Phil Mahler if you are interested in this committee. ■

COBRA RATES

Effective August 1, 2000

Non-Unit

Indemnity Individual Coverage

Monthly: \$17.92
Quarterly: \$53.76

Individual Indemnity Year: \$215.04

PPO Individual Coverage

Monthly: \$20.76
Quarterly: \$62.28

Indemnity Family Yearly: \$249.12

MTA

MTA PPO Individual Coverage

Monthly: \$16.
Quarterly: \$50.61

MTA PPO Individual Yearly: \$202.44

Non-Unit COBRA Group Numbers

Non-Unit PPO: 00 228 7941
Non-Unit Indemnity: 00 228 3341

MTA COBRA Group Numbers

MTA PPO: 00-8859-9999

Indemnity Family Coverage

Monthly: \$41.07
Quarterly: \$123.21

Indemnity Family Yearly- \$492.84

PPO Family Coverage

Monthly: \$51.18
Quarterly: \$153.54

PPO Family Yearly: \$614.16

MTA PPO Family Coverage

Monthly: \$42.04
Quarterly: \$126-12

MTA PPO Family Yearly: \$504.48

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