

General Union Meeting
Oct 9, 2013
Minutes

The minutes of the Sept 11 GUM were circulated. A motion was made to approve the minutes. The motion was approved (with one abstention).

Homecoming

The Homecoming is on Fri, Oct 12, and the Local will have a table to hand out AFT logoed swag and Local 1904 water. We would like to have volunteers to stand at the table. Jennifer asked those interested in volunteering to email her.

David Benfield said that the Philosophy and Religion Department is having an alumni event on Homecoming, and everyone is welcome to it. Rich said that there is a football game at 2:00 and Tim Sullivan would be flipping the coin at the event. Anyone who knows Tim is encouraged to come and wish him well.

Political action

Bill said that there are labor walks every Saturday in which members could participate. Phone banking presents another opportunity for political involvement.

The AFTNJ field organizer addressed the group. She was recruiting for the labor walks scheduled for Oct 19 and Nov 2. Volunteers were needed for about three hours for the labor walks.

Rich said that the Union has not formally endorsed anybody for the gubernatorial elections in the state. AFTNJ, however, has endorsed Barbara Buono for the position. Rich said that, one's political affiliation notwithstanding, it is likely that reelection of Governor Christie would cost union member households thousands of dollars. There is even speculation that he might introduce "Right to Work" legislation in a bid to curb the unions in the state. He is leading by a big margin, but Democrats have a huge edge in numbers—there are approximately 700,000 more registered Democrats than Republicans in the state. The key to election outcome would, therefore, be turnout. Rich announced that he had minimum wage placards and lawn signs for those who want them. The minimum wage issue is a social justice issue and it is not clear if it would pass. Rich said that his suggestion is to vote in accordance with one's personal economic interest in this election.

In response to a question about the upcoming gubernatorial debate to take place in Kasser Theater, Rich said that the Union does not have tickets to the event. A demonstration, by Senator Buono's supporters, is planned.

David Benfield spoke about the University Senate and how it is gearing up for action on several issues. So far, there has been one success: the path next to the field is now lighted after its potentially unsafe condition was brought to the attention of the

administration. The goal of making MSU a “No-Smoking campus” is also on the agenda. The presence of nineteen veterans on campus makes this a hard and complicated issue. Rich added that the Senate is one of the few places on campus where you can hear what is going on all over campus in one place . Also mentioned was the next Board of Trustees meeting, scheduled for Oct 31 was another place where information is made public. David mentioned that Bob Noonan, President of the MSU adjunct union, wants representation for adjuncts on the Senate.

Librarian Issues

Meiling Chow informed that the library has a new librarian and the Union has a new member. The library union members are working on fixing a schedule to constitute the elected committees.

Paul Martinez spoke about the book drive for Irvington schools that he was coordinating. He noted that eight people had contributed, so far, a total of fifty five books. Books could be dropped off at his office, in Technical Services, in the library. The Local could also arrange to have a student pick up books from an office. Jennifer asked that Linda Turano at the Local’s office be contacted if one wanted books picked up from an office. A wide variety of books, from pre-kindergarten to 8th grade, would be gladly accepted. Non-fiction is preferred, but fiction is also acceptable. Both new and gently used books could be given.

Professional Staff Issues

Dana spoke about the professional staff reappointment workshop that took place in the previous week. On Oct 24, there would be another workshop. Debra Davis, from the Council, would be at the workshop, and talk about multi-year appointments. Dana asked professional staff to attend the workshop and take advantage of the opportunity. There would, probably, be another workshop in June.

Jennifer said that as the professional staff representative on the Council, she is working on the upcoming contract. She would also be presenting at the New Jersey City University, in Jersey City, on professional staff issues.

Faculty Outreach Coordinator

Vanessa mentioned the recently held faculty reappointment workshop, which was attended by about twenty people. The next workshop is scheduled for Dec 5, 3-5 pm. She has also been contacted by faculty about DPAC issues. Sometimes members of DPAC are not fully aware of the rules and procedures pertaining to reappointment, tenure and promotion. There would be another workshop on tenure during the last week of classes in May 2014.

Rich mentioned that an unprecedented issue arose during the week, but the Local has decided not to do anything at present. He reassured those present that speaking to the union about a problem would not automatically lead to action or filing of

grievance. The union is very cautious about personnel issues, and it would not proceed without the consent of the person in question. Vanessa said that the union works hard to not create an adversarial environment.

Rich said that there is a tenure bill in the legislature, which would increase the tenure clock from five to six years. There is no change of criteria, however. It is safe to say that as a result of this increase, fewer people would get tenure. Bill said that the tenure bill has already passed assembly and is currently in the senate.

Jennifer spoke about personnel matters (Kathy was attending a meeting with a member in HR). She reminded those present that in the event of a meeting with a supervisor in which disciplinary action is on the table, members have a right to have a union representative present at the meeting. If the meeting had a different agenda but turned to discipline, one has the right to call it off contractually. In response to a question about what constitutes "discipline," Jennifer said that anything related to pay deduction, rank, and, broadly, matters related to employment can be construed as such.

Rich said that since Kathy is not present he would talk about some of the prominent personnel action taken recently. At the end of the summer, the university moved to initiate detenturing proceedings against two faculty members. One of these has been settled. In the Oct 31 meeting, the BOT's Appeals committee will consider the other case. This person is not accused of personal financial impropriety and he did not gain financially from what he is accused of. The Union's legal bills in the case already amount to about \$15,000. It is a technical case, and as it moves to an administrative judge, the Chronicle would likely cover the issue. The union is vigorously defending the faculty member and at the end of the day, this case would probably cost us around \$30,000. Rich mentioned that all the union members are covered by professional liability insurance (up to \$1 million).

In response to a question about what might have driven the administration's decision to initiate detenturing proceedings, Rich felt that it is a result of the changing nature of the university. As the university continues to hire more and more administrators from the business world, these incidents would likely increase. Ken added that it is part of an emerging pattern where classroom absence and other such matters may also be treated more strictly than in the past. Jennifer said that the administration is also closely monitoring sick leave. If HR finds that more than 12 days of sick leave taken during a 12-month period, they would approach payroll and ask for documentation. Rich added that the Union is spending a significant amount of money on grievances and related personnel matters. For instance, for the last two years we the union has been fighting a fitness-for-duty case.

Negotiations

The Union has been working on several different pieces of negotiations since September. In the guise of cleaning up the LSPA language, the administration is making demands that are more than procedural, and attempting to dilute peer-

review. One of the administration's proposals is to have student evaluations every semester, electronically, across campus, using standard forms. Some questions will be allowed to be added by the departments, with the approval of the college deans. Another proposal involves a new requirement of asking faculty going up for reappointment, tenure and promotion to procure external letters of support. The negotiations are ongoing.

Career Development

The administration is proposing to overhaul the Career Development application process. Their proposal has no university committee and the recommendations would go directly from the chair to the dean. The local would never agree to that. They are trying to turn it into a tenure/reappointment type of exercise. The total funds available annually under Career Development are around \$60,000. The next round of applications for Career Development would be in December.

Ken reported that the union is also working on finalizing an agreement on patents. Rich and he are also working on securing a better deal for the Instructional/Clinical Specialists.

Mike Heller spoke about entering arbitration for a release time dispute. We will have the outcome by November. Last year the Local had a surplus of approximately \$60,000. The surplus depends on, among other factors, whether it is a negotiations year or not, and the number of grievances and the resulting legal fees. This year, for instance, the legal fees are higher than average. A substantial part of our dues goes toward our membership in the National and Council. In future, our membership fees for AFTNJ are likely to increase, although, at this stage, we do not know the exact amount.

For the President's Report, Rich said that he does not have anything more to add. In response to a question about the bill pending in the legislature about increasing the duration for receiving tenure in a State college, Rich said that the Assembly bill is 1165 and in the Senate it is 1160.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.