

General Membership Zoom Meeting  
February 19, 2021

**Minutes**

President Stan Bergman called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Attending Members : Joseph Allen, Stanley Bergman, Rosemary Catanzariti, Bill Conron, Mike C., Amy Fortunato, Joan Garippa, DuWayne Gregory, Nancy Goroff, Lenny Grundt, Marilyn Gutierrez, Barbara Hafner, Peter Hanson, Marge Harrison, John Hyland, James B. Jacobs, Nat King, Louise Levine, Kathleen Lyons, Louise & Michael, Charles McAteer, Don Pagel, Christine Rasser, Roberta Roberts, Catherine Rosario-Rodriguez, Harry Stuckey, Robert Souto, Patty Stoddard, Nina Tribble, Clement Wigfall, Judy Wishnia, Arlene Wynn.

There was quorum to hold the meeting as per the By-Laws

**Special Guest Speakers**

Stan requested a motion to have the Executive Board reports after the Guest Speakers for this meeting. The motion was seconded and approved. There were two Guest Speakers for this General Membership Meeting, the Hon. DuWayne Gregory, Post Majority Leader of the Suffolk County Legislature and Member Nat King. DuWayne spoke first. He is currently serving on the Babylon Town Council after serving for eleven (11) years as a County Legislator of which he served seven (7) years as Presiding Officer, the first African American to do so. DuWayne spoke of growing up in a middle-class family in Suffolk County. His grandfather served in World War II with the Tuskegee Airman, his father an auto mechanic and his mother a nurse. DuWayne has spent most of his adult life working with local government but has never seen such a devastating medical, financial and social impact which the Covid-19 pandemic has caused especially to minorities. He emphasized the importance of getting the population most affected by Covid-19 to get vaccinated. In response to a question on what the towns are doing to help small business., DuWayne spoke about a special program which the Town of Babylon has set up to help small businesses. However, there will be some businesses which will not be able to come back. Suffolk County is in serious financial state, because 48-50% of its' funding comes from property tax and the rest comes from sales tax. Since the lockdown, spending is down due to people losing their jobs and a loss of millions in sales tax. DuWayne is hoping that President Biden's Covid-19 bill passes because it offers help to state and local governments. Getting people vaccinated especially within minority communities is a high priority with DuWayne, announcing that Babylon has opened a vaccination center at church. He also advised that veterans could receive the vaccine and offered the information, VETERANS 1- (800) 551-3996, which veterans can call. Stan thanked DuWayne and asked him to come back to give an update on vaccinations.

Stan introduce the second Special Guest Speaker, Nat King, who is a member of LI NYSARA. February is African American History Month. To honor the month, the Meeting Committee invited Nat to make a presentation. Nat spoke about a historical fact which is mostly forgotten: that slavery and slave trade existed on Long Island during the colonial period and the early years of the American republic. Nat showed a picture of the Sylvester Manor in Shelter Island where the first slave was brought to Long Island in 1652, in a period that had the largest enslaved population. The Manor is now an educational center; in the stairway to the attic are the names of the former slaves which lived there. At one point during the colonial period, one in every ten settlers on Long Island had a slave which outnumbered all the New England colonies.

Many of the graveyards of the slaves have been left neglected with a majority having been bulldozed over. A group of Stony Brook University students were able to unearth one of those graveyards. It was pointed out that a slave graveyard is intact on the estate of William Floyd. Floyd was the only signer of the Declaration of Independence from Long Island at the Continental Congress; he owned the most slaves in New York at that time. Slavery in New York began to ebb away through a series of laws in 1799 and 1827, which resulted in abolition in 1830. Slaves worked both in the fields and in a domestic capacity. By the time New York ended slavery in 1830, many former slaves had learned trades in order to support themselves after emancipation, which allowed them to stay on the island. There was a large group which intermarried with the Native Americans that can be found today in 2 reservations on the eastern portion of Long Island, the Shinnecock and the Poospatuck. Their descendants still live in there. Stan thanked Nat for his presentation.

**President's Report:** Stan reported that the letter to Rep. Lee Zeldin was sent. The letter was published in the local Smithtown newspaper.

**Vice-President's Report:** Joan reported that the Legislative Committee would be having a meeting on February 26<sup>th</sup>. For the General Membership Meeting the topics will be the First 100<sup>th</sup> Days of the Biden Presidency and the Covid-19 Vaccines. For the Spring Conference the speakers will be Adrienne Esposito and Roger Clayman.

**Secretary's Report:** The minutes of the General Membership Meeting of January 15, 2021 were reviewed. A motion to accept the minutes was made and seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report:** Mike Clarke reported that the balance is \$674.02 in the account.

### **Committee Reports**

- **Environmental Justice Committee:** Chairperson John Hyland asked Joan if NYSUT would help host the Spring Conference on Zoom. If NYSUT is not available, is it possible to ask the New York City Labor Council which hosted the Fall Conference on Zoom. John stated that there are more environment concerns about the water. It appears that chemicals which were used to purify the water are now showing problems. Member James B. Jacobs spoke about a letter sent to Town of Hempstead residents about a pollution plume affecting the water table. Stan reported that he also received the same letter. Both are in the same water district, so it was not a problem affecting all of Nassau County. Joan asked Stan for a copy of the letter.

### **New Business:**

- Bill Conron spoke about a report from a group which Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is involved with that there have been serious bad effects from the second dose of the Covid-19 vaccination. Bill stated that Mr. Kennedy is a well-known anti-vaccine conspirator, who also has worked for many worthy causes to help those in need. He also noted that there is a New York Times article which reported that there has been certain persons with serious side effects with the second dose, but these are not the vast majority and should not deter the many who need vaccination.
- Mike Siderakis attending his first General Membership meeting, introduced himself. He is a retired New York State Trooper and he ran in the 2<sup>nd</sup> State Senate District as Democrat during the November 2020 elections which he lost to his opponent. He said the election cycle was tough due to the former President and the great misinformation going out. Mike spoke about the need to inform the electorate and to getting the people out to vote.

- Joan announced that with a new year, all non-union NYSARA member are encouraged to give a \$10 donation. NYSARA members who are union members pay through their retiree dues.

**Good and Welfare:**

- While there has been reports of side effects regarding the Covid-19 vaccines and especially with the second doses, it is important to receive the vaccine. The safety measures of mask wear, social distancing, hand washing should continue even after vaccinating.

Motion to adjourn was made by Bob and seconded by Bill. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

These minutes are respectfully submitted by

Catherine Rosario-Rodriguez, Secretary