Minutes

The UUP Veterans Committee

January 29, 2017

Members in Attendance: William Borgstede and Justin Culkowski Co-Chairs of the Committee, Cliff DaVis, Kevin Moriarty, Stuart L’hommedieu, Ray Gleason-liaison to the Executive Committee, John Thomas Hogle, Michael Knee

Guests: Carol Jewell- Albany, Michael Carbone-Morrisville, Tracy Guynup-Plattsburg, Yvette Gedeon -UUP legislative assistant, and Alithea Rodriguez-Rolon from NYSUT

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair William Borgstede at 1:02 p.m. at the Saratoga Springs Hilton. Members and guests introduced themselves.

Carroll Jewell from the Disabilities Rights and Concerns Committee noted she hoped her committee and the veterans committee might have common interests and be able to assist each other.

Co-Chair Justin Culkowski asked the members to approve the minutes from the May meeting as there had not been a formal meeting since that time to approve the minutes. Cliff DaVis moved, and Mike Knee seconded a motion to approve. The minutes were approved as written.

An update on the Resolution passed at the last DA to provide equal retirement benefits for ORP retirees was addressed by guest, Alithea Rodriguez-Rolon from NYSUT. She indicated the State Retirement System and the ORP system are too different for there to be an equal treatment for retirees. She offered that an education campaign for new hires was a more likely means to assist veterans relative to benefits for retirement. She handed out a side by side comparison chart used at a SUNY campus for new hires to review before choosing their retirement system. In summary, she was very doubtful any remedy addressed by the Resolution was possible.

The membership list was handed out noting it was smaller than in the past as some members were no longer listed. Some guests at the meeting indicated their desire to join the Veterans Committee and were instructed to ask their campus UUP president to endorse their joining or to go to the UUP president to indicate their willingness to serve on the Committee.

Bill Borgstede reviewed the honoring of Gina Doty at the last DA via a special order recognizing her service to UUP as chair of the Veterans Committee.

J. Culkowski shared the “Charge” to the Veterans Committee which was provided just the night before from UUP President Kowal. He indicated a strategic plan was to be drafted by the Committee for presentation at the Plenary session on Monday afternoon. The Co-chairs will work on this and much discussion followed about the rights of veterans in the workplace and how to learn about any problems they faced.

J. Culkowski indicated we would try to raise funds for the Disabled American Veterans organization at the Benefits event on Monday and he would like members to staff the table from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Ed Hines had forwarded an email suggesting that the Veterans Committee find out which government offices offered benefits for veterans. It was discussed and agreed that individual veterans would have to ask their local municipalities for this information as the committee could not obtains this information nor keep it current. Much discussion followed about special benefits given to veterans with and without disabilities.

J. Culkowski asked the members for any goals not previously covered in discussion. Mike Knee raised the possibility of our Committee joining other veteran groups to keep informed of veteran concerns. He noted PEF and CSEA belonged to some organizations. It was noted, by Kevin Moriarty, that NYSUT does not even have a veterans committee. This topic is to be pursued.

The Commencement regalia cords were discussed at length. Tom Hogle noted he would be willing to work on this but it was later decided that since the veterans committee is now a standing committee it should have a budget and could buy cords for distribution at the next DA in early May. B. Borgsted and J. Culkowski will contact UUP President Kowal to get funding for 100 cords and this will be noted in an article in the “VOICE.”

Ray Gleason asked for “bullets” so he could make a report at the next Executive Committee. This will be done by J. Culkowski.

Stu L’hommendieu moved the meeting be adjourned. It adjourned at 2:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Justin Culkowsk, Co-Chair