

**Draft Minutes of  
The East Aurora Council of the AFT Local 604**

**October 16, 2025**

**@ East Aurora High School**

**4:15 PM - 5:45 PM**

**In attendance:** Aishia Jefferson, Ann Snodgrass, Arlette Gomez, Alan Scott, Anndella Bee, Becky Roireau, Beth Cotter, Christy Harding, Danielle Grady, Henry Johnson, Iliana Ochoa, Jessica Sheldon, Jessica Fisher, Justin Skattum, Jennifer Gentile, John Fanning, Joyce Ladewig, Kara Bown, Karen Mueller, Kristi Pokornowski, Lisa Pena, Lisa Samp, Melinda Thomas, Mary Taylor, Nicole Connoly, Nicole Thayer, Stephanie Campbell, Sara Lojewski, Sandro Bonilla, Sandra Williams, Susan Salinas-Ramirez, Tim Hollins, Trevor Schrage, Victoria Haier

**Building Representatives, Executive Council Officers, or Senators Not In**

**Attendance:** Aviva Pollack Paradise, Angie Sanchez, Amy Van Cura, Alison Mann Nile, Brittany Peterson, Beth Eadens, Brian Henricks, Cyn Citro, Carrie Snyder, Dulce Jonsson, Dawn Stanfa, Eileen Pasturczak, Elaine Halleran, Fatima Ballesteros, Gloria Salinas, John Burkhalter, John Devine, Jeff Hansford, Janel Jaros, Jill Doyle, Jodi Eppenstein, Julie Melendez, Jon Kuehl, Julie Schmale, Joy Caro, Judy Durham, Kim Stolpestad, Lorraine Garciacano, Mary Carol Smith, Mara Clucas, Kaliegh Soumar, Michelle Hanna, Michelle Taylor, Pablo Macias Contador, Patrick Bednarik, Pamela Miller, Stacey Boyce, Sandra Vazquez, Stephanie Hansen, Tim Snyder.

Motion to approve start of meeting: Kristi Pokornowski, Trevor Schrage - Approved. Pass, all. Nays, none. Abstains, none.

**Senators' Reports**

Henry: Good evening. We had our meeting yesterday. I wanted to share with you two things that grasped my mind. #1, as you know, or maybe you don't, the No Kings protest is happening in Aurora, Chicago, all over the United States. This is obviously a very important event.

We are following our constitutional rights and we have our right to protest, but there are those out there who didn't take Constitution 101. You have to be careful. Don't give them any kind of excuse to hurt you or to make a situation into something it's not. They are looking for this. If they can take a television producer and slam her into the ground, think about what they will do to documented and undocumented, or based on their skill color. Be careful.

There are parents who are very worried. But they need to understand that they are not alone. There are organizations out there working for them. They should contact an immigration attorney. Some detainees are given their rights to make a call. Contact the family. Contact an attorney. If you are or they are detained, say these words, "I am exercising my 5th attorney right to remain silent and I refuse to answer any questions."

All these little cards are perfect. Laminate them. Have them on your person.

ALAN: I will scan all the materials the senators' have and I'll post them into our union Google Classrooms.

Henry: I did have a student who was picked up. Advise parents to have backup plans, more backup plans, and backup plans after that to care for their kids if something happens to them.

I'm not a big social media person. I'm on Facebook. And I got a Tic Tok. But Snap Chat, Twitter, I don't even know. But I do know Snap Chat is very popular. If you share your phone number with a parent or student - Why would you do that? - then whoever you give it to can follow you. But be aware that anyone seeing it might decide to retaliate against you. Be careful.

Give from the heart. Be careful this weekend.

Christy: I have a few fliers. There is something about substance abuse. There is another organization that is providing backpacks and books. It is part of your Union Plus benefits.

There were 34 drops from the union. Not in our district, but across the Local. So let people know about our benefits.

Becky: Thank you for going to that and sharing that.

#### **Secretary's Report:**

- Reviewed union meeting minutes from [09/18/25](#)

Motion to approve: Henry Johnson, Mary Taylor - Approved. Pass, all. Nays, none. Abstains, none.

#### **Treasurer's Report:**

- Reviewed [September Budget Report](#)

Sandra: Normally we'd be getting our stipend checks today, but due to some technology issues, our printer, they will be a little late. Thank you.

Becky: Any questions about the budget?

Melinda, Beth.

Motion to approve: Melinda Thomas, Beth Cotter - Approved. Pass, all. Nays, 0. Abstains, 0.

#### **President's Remarks**

- Welcome to the new HOD members

Becky: I wanted to introduce our new reps. Justine. Sheldon. Lisa. Sara. Nicole.

And Jessica Fischer is taking on the role of VP 3 of Office. She has done a lot. Everyone welcome, Jessica!

APPLAUS.

Jessica: Thank you.

- Committee Update

Becky: We have all our joint committees up and running or planned. That is a positive development for us. Calendar is planning for two years. Yay! PERA has dates planned.

Safety and Security Committee is broken up. We have one for high school, and then another. The high school is like its own little city. They will meet during zero hour so that support and office can participate.

Trevor: READS DRAFT OF PERA STATEMENT. To summarize, SLO is going to be removed from evaluations moving forward after this year. This update will be sent out this week.

**VP - Teachers:**

Jennifer: Nothing to discuss at this time.

**VP - Staff:**

Sandro: If anyone in your building is having issues with toileting and supplies, make sure to let us know.

**VP - Clerical**

NO COMMENTS.

Melinda: I'm going to send a message to you and Jen Mitchell, and we'd love for the window for grading to end on a Monday and not at midnight on Saturday. We need more time to grade.

**Building Rep Training- Adam Harding**

[Member Representation Training Slides](#)

Adam: Hi, everyone. I'm going to power this up [Newline] and tell about myself. I came from East Aurora. I'm committed. I was part of this union for a long time.

Who remembers when the committees came in? We did that. The union. In 2012, 13. They went well, but then they fell to the wayside. But now they are coming back strong.

You might hear a lot of members complain about the dues going to the union. But with the SLO, we can see how our dollars can go to things that are practical and useful.

I left in the era of data, data, data. Nothing more frustrating looking at year-old data and trying to make decisions based on that.

But we have to welcome in staff. However you arrived here, I am appreciative, and I'm ecstatic to see lots of staff who come here after putting in a full days' work.

Where is Melinda? I had her as a teacher.

Melinda: He was a real ass.

LAUGHTER.

Adam: Look. I am appreciative of a few exciting things going on here. HANDS OUT PACKETS. You will get an electronic version too.

We are here to talk briefly about member representation. When I started out as a teacher, I didn't even read my contract for the first three years. I was just trying to survive. In reality, I didn't set out to be Service Director of the IFT. And now I'm in my 13th year of working with IFT. I can get into spaces with leaders and push back, good civil feedback. We need a lawyer, but the majority of the time, it is a waste of money to spend hundreds of dollars an hour when you have elected officials who can do that work. I'm not here to do a spiel on the union. But we always need to connect the dots.

Back when I started, building reps did the work in the buildings. But then all those tasks get transferred into the central office. And things might have started in the buildings but would quickly get sent to the central office.

But now we have a new superintendent. New boss. Good guy. My personal experience, he is very good, very awesome individual. He has those things you can't teach. You can't teach the willingness to serve. That might be innate to some people. My job is to be behind the scenes. My task, a serious grievance, an issue with someone's job is on the line.

We need to act like a union. ADAM TALKED ABOUT AN ISSUE OF A LONG TERM UNRESELVED GRIEVANCE. Bob came in and magically things got better. People are talking about things. When you can talk, things get better. I want union leaders and admin, heads together and butts up. He saw a problem when he came in, it wasn't his mess. And he made a decision to sit down, look at facts. That is a good sign.

Let's go around really quick, telling how many years you've done union work.

Rep: Less than an hour!

CHEERS AND APPLAUS AND LAUGHTER!

Adam: Yes! Anyone less than an hour?

Anyone more than twenty years?

Jennifer: 37 years.

Rep: 22 years.

Rep: 20 years.

Adam: I wish we had an opportunity like Union 101. More trainings, if you are interested, let your leadership team know.

Does everyone know what senators do? Even that kind of knowledge..

East Aurora Council. Local 604 is in Cresthill. We have 70+ councils that come there. Senators represent councils. 604, second largest in the state. The

largest? CTU, Chicago. There are about 50 field staff around the state who do what I do. My job is liaison between departments. Same thing with lawyers. IFT is state, and AFT is national. It's nuanced. You could get a whole college degree in unionism. It is important to just stop, if there are acronyms you don't know.

It is a negotiations year this year.

You have handouts here. They are the same as our Slides. This just scratches the surface.

The union has a duty of fair representation, and our job as elected union officials, or voluntold officials, is to represent our members and non-members equally. We have a legal obligation to represent non-members. It's nuanced. But I see them as freeloaders. But it is the reality we live in. We used to have Fair Share. It used to be there was a cost to do business, but the Supreme Court declared that unconstitutional. We had the obligation before but it is heightened now. Granular but a surface picture of what we are doing.

What does this look like?

Treat everyone the same, regardless of status. Consider the situation on its merits. Investigate and keep notes. Meet all time frames - like if you are filing a grievance.

Becky: For people who are union members, I might accompany them to DCFS meetings. That is not required, but I'll do it as a bonus for members.

Adam: A sick bank. Or DCFS.

Relationships and behaviors with members. Be real with them. It is important: If you don't know, admit it. It can be hard. The important aspect is to admit you don't know but then go find out and get back to them.

I get calls from union presidents, daily communicating, questions they have. It is better to check and weigh in on it.

You have VPs here. It was important to represent our constituencies.

Behavior with management. It was very hard for principals to deal with me. I had a principal who couldn't see a difference between Adam the Building Rep in the building vs Adam the 4th grade teacher. Establish it. It got so bad I'd have to say, *I'm putting on my union hat right now*. But it really helped both of us. Many principals, if we got together outside of school, we'd have probably gotten along well. But make sure you are really focused to discuss the issues at hand.

NLRB vs. J. Weingarten. You have the right to union representation. It is guaranteed. There was a case where J. Weingarten sued the NLRB, and we gained this right. You may have seen little cards. Here is the legal ruling: *If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated or have any effect on my personal working conditions, I respectfully request my union representative, office, or steward to be present in this meeting. Without union representation, I choose not to participate in this discussion.*

This is an I statement. The functional rules are right there. The employee has to request that. In a lot of spaces, they might say, bring a Building Rep. But

a principal might say, *Hey, can you come to talk with me.* Then you go and it concerns a discipline issue. Then the staff needs to make the request. They need to know they can ask.

If you ask, they should stop the meeting right away.

As a Building Rep, you have the right to know an umbrella about the situation. Is it discipline? You can ask about what. They might say, *Come to the meeting.* It is best but not always possible to do a little research before the meeting.

Jessica: What about fact finding?

Adam: You can sometimes object to questions, but it is their meeting and they need to investigate.

Rep: If the staff member does not trust the admin, and they request me-

Adam: Ask forgiveness, not permission. And you can always say, *We think there is a reasonable belief that discipline will result from the investigatory meeting.*

Some districts, staff will ask reps to come to evaluations meetings too. Sometimes admin don't mind because then there are more witnesses about what has happened.

The big one is, insubordination. Don't give admin another reason to hang something on you. If they say a rep is denied, they should still go. But I haven't heard of that happening. Comply first, grieve later. That is a big mantra. If they discipline you, then you need to immediately grieve that. I'd probably get involved in something like that. But it is always better to handle things locally.

You can't pick who you want to take. Nice things about schools, most people get along. But admin can't say, *You can bring this rep but not another. Or, I want someone from this school but not our school.* But if there are problems or trust issues, that won't help matters.

It's not like Blue Bloods. "You better get your union rep and be here at 5 AM!" But the law says, the member needs to make that request.

But you can put that into the contract. If there is a discipline meeting, a rep needs to be present.

You've been dragged in, what's happening today, you are in a meeting, it will probably begin with an investigation. We all have our note system. It may not work for someone else. But if you are doing it professionally, make it concise because you may need to hand it over. With great power comes great responsibility. You need to have that responsibility of passing things off if they get even more serious.

Best practices, file folder. Ideally, interview the member beforehand.

CONTINUED DISCUSSION: Key points not in the slideshow:

- When interviewing a member (outside of meeting with admin), it's OK to tell them they screwed up and should not be doing something. Just don't say it in the meeting.

- Remind members to avoid "verbal diarrhea": Answer questions as succinctly as possible - Yes or no answers if possible. Do not give extra information.
- Admin has sometimes asked questions like, "This is about an incident that occurred on X date. Can you tell us what happened?" Staff then start groping around in their memory and may spill out information that DOES make them look bad but was not what admin was investigating: "I think I was late that day," "I yelled at a student in 3rd period". If admin does not provide more specifics, members should not be groping around for what they may have done wrong. Without more information, you were a perfect employee that day.
- There are situations where we are not allowed to be a part of the meeting, like evaluation meetings. Some districts do allow union members to do that, because administrators feel like, "More witnesses are fine."

Building Issues - none

Motion to adjourn. Melinda Thomas, Jessica Fisher - Approved. Pass, all. Nays, none. Abstains, none.