



**New York City DC 37 Retirees Association
General Membership Meeting Minutes
January 29, 2026 at 10AM
(Held virtually via Phone & Zoom)**

Administrator Ann Widger began the meeting at 10AM, gave welcome remarks and called the meeting to order. She introduced Deputy Administrator Terri Brady who led the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence to honor Alex Pretti and Renée Macklin Good.

REMARKS from Khalia Kweli

Khalia Kweli, DC 37 Political Action & Legislation Department, provided an update on Lobby Day and ways to get involved with PEOPLE and our Political Action Committee (PAC) program.

She began by reminding members that we have a very busy election year. Our Primary Day will be on June 24th and we will be voting for Governor, State Comptroller, State Attorney General, State Senators, State Assembly Members, and Members of the House of Representatives. She stated that PAC needs help to be sure that everyone is prepared and registered to vote in upcoming elections.

She shared that DC 37 2026 Lobby Day, which was originally scheduled for March 3rd, has been moved to March 4. You do not need to register if you have already done so. Buses will be leaving from the DC 37 Headquarters at 6AM and depart Albany around 3PM. I will be meeting with our State Legislators to discuss our priorities in the year ahead, including Tier 6 Reform, taxing the rich, worker safety, and other legislative priorities. It is extremely effective from the Legislators to hear directly from the Retirees. If you have not already signed up, please do so today:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfKx9iXxn05v05XuwBaMWmRntTbTb4JC315dTPRGP2Dukq9gA/viewform>

She thanked Retirees for their generous contribution to the PEOPLE (Public Employees Organized to Promote Legislative Equality) campaign. She explained that the PEOPLE Program is not allowed to use membership dues for political activities, so it is important to secure PEOPLE donations. It is an easy way to get involved and support their efforts. She stated that Retirees can donate any amount via voluntary dues deduction from their pension. She encouraged Retirees to contribute at the MVP level (\$100 annually). If you would like an application, we would be happy to assist you with that.

The Political Action Committee is seeking volunteers. If you would like to get more involved, she encouraged members to participate in the DC 37 monthly Political Action Committee meetings which take place at DC 37 Headquarters, 125 Barclay Street, on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6pm. You can sign up online or by reaching out to her. She concluded by asking members to stay tuned for Political Action alerts.

REMARKS from Martine Ortiz

Martine Ortiz, Social & Community Engagement Committee Member, shared some highlights from the 2026 AFL-CIO Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Civil and Human Rights Conference which was held in Baltimore, Maryland from January 15th-18th. She shared that it was a powerful and meaningful experience that brought together labor leaders, activists, faith leaders and organizers from around the country. The theme of January's conference is "Honoring Our History--Fighting for Our Future." One of our speakers was Lee Saunders, President of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. The message was clear, the fight for justice continues, and every generation has an important role to play. Most importantly it reminded us that retirees are not on the sidelines was still a powerful force in the labor movement. We help build this movement and we have a responsibility to protect what we fought for.

REMARKS from Page Best-Hardy

Page Best-Hardy, Political & Legislative Action Committee Member, provided a brief recap on the Retirees Association. She shared that in the fall; we hosted five Borough-wide information sessions with anywhere from 70 to 130 participants at each location. Each session provided an update from the Office of Labor Relation, Emblem Health, Aetna, DC 37 Health & Security, DC 37 Political Action Committee, the Office of the Comptroller Unclaimed Funds division and several pro-retiree elected officials providing resources directly to our members and where they live.

She shared that our 2025 Holiday Luncheon and Food Drive was held on December 11th in DC 37 Headquarters' 11th floor. The theme of the event was "DC 37 Retirees Give Back." She continued by stating we were honored to welcome New York State Attorney General Leticia James, Former City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams, New York State Comptroller, Thomas DiNapoli and DC 37 Executive Director, Henry Garrido. In the true spirit of giving, retirees donated over five large boxes of nutritious food donations to the Praxis Kingbridge Family Shelter in the Bronx. It was a great event filled with music, and meaningful moments of connection and service.

REMARKS from Stephanie Darrisaw

Stephanie Darrisaw, DC 37 Retirees Association Coordinator, shared an update on the Summer Outing, Committee Invites and upcoming Local Meetings.

She began by thanking the retirees who continue to support and participate in our efforts. She shared that all committees meet once a month, either in person at 125 Barclay Street or via Zoom, to ensure consistent planning, coordination, and engagement. She applauded the efforts of the Social and Community Engagement for their outstanding job planning events that bring our retirees together. The most recent event they organized was the 2025 Holiday Luncheon. The overall feedback was extremely positive.

Last year, the Social and Community Engagement distributed a survey to help guide future social programming, and the survey produced relevant and actionable feedback. She shared the committee is using that feedback to plan additional activities, including Broadway shows, museum visits, walking tours,

and other experiences of interest to our retirees. She shared that the Committee is currently planning a trip to Holiday Hill on July 25, 2026. She encouraged members to please save the date -- more information will be shared shortly.

She shared that the Membership and Engagement Committee continues to focus on strengthening and growing our membership. They have been working collaboratively with the Social Committee and the Policy and Legislative Committee to support outreach efforts, including envelope-stuffing initiatives for membership renewals and outreach to potential members. The Membership Committee also played a key role in the planning and organization of our borough meetings, and those meetings would not have been successful without their hard work and dedication.

The Political and Legislative Committee remains focused on addressing issues that impact our retirees. The committee is currently exploring ways to bring forward ideas and recommendations that can be shared with Mayor Mandani and his team for consideration and support. They continue to work with the PAC, make VMO outreach calls to members, and will be participating in the March 4th trip to Albany. The committee also actively supports DC37 Political Action meetings to ensure retiree concerns are heard.

She concluded by stating that all of our committees share common goals -- to support, engage, and advocate for our retirees. If you are interested in joining a committee or becoming more involved, she encouraged members to contact her at 212-815-7585 or by email at sdarrisaw@dc37.net.

REMARKS from Jillian Garcia

Jillian Garcia shared a vast overview of the DC 37 Health & Security Plan. She stated as a retiree, you are entitled to the following benefits: dental, optical, prescription drugs, legal services (MELS), audiology, personal counseling (PSU), audiology and Death Benefits.

The DC 37 Dental Plan is Delta Dental and is a New York Select Plan and outside New York it is a Delta Dental PPO. As of September 1, 2020, members are covered for \$1700 per calendar year. The New York Selection Network has over 1808 dentists – 1,448 general dentists and 360 specialty dentists. The Delta PPO Network has 124,107 dentists – 97,764 general dentists and 26,343 specialty dentists. The Delta Dental DC 37 Customer Service Center can be reached at 1 (888) 523-DC37 (3237), call DC 212-815-1234 or visit <https://www1.deltadentalins.com/group-sites/dc37.html> . Eligible retirees are welcome to make an appointment for treatment at our DC 37 Manhattan Dental Center at 115 Chambers Street. To make an appointment, call 212-815-1006. She recommended that retirees take advantage of preventative care services and see a dentist every 6 months to avoid major dental work.

She discussed the Prescription Drug Benefit for members. Optum Rx is the prescription drug plan for non-Medicare Eligible retirees. Aetna Rx is the prescription drug plan for Medicare Eligible retirees. She encouraged members to use the 90-Day Voluntary Mail Order Pharmacy so they can buy two prescriptions and get one free. She suggested members call 212-815-1608 for more information.

She reviewed Optical Benefits, which is \$250 once every two years, and includes lenses, frames and examinations. She asked that members contact the office to ensure they are entitled to receive reimbursement and optical vouchers at 212-815-1234.

The audiology benefits, one exam every 3 years, are provided at the DC 37 Health Center at 115 Chambers Street in Manhattan. This benefit is for members only. It provides a hearing evaluation by an audiologist and, if necessary, a hearing aid. If deemed necessary by the center's audiologist, the benefit will provide a maximum of two (2) basic hearing aids (left and right ear) within a three-year period. Call 212-791-2126 to make an appointment.

She shared that the DC 37 Personal Services Unit (PSU) provides various social work services. It is staffed with professionally trained social workers who can help with emotional and family concerns and adjustments to retirement. They offer group counseling, outreach programs, and services for homebound members and retirees. Retirees can call them to set up a counseling session at 212-815-1250.

She shared information about Municipal Employees Legal Services (MELS) that advise retirees on personal legal matters. She stated that they could assist with the preparation of wills, debt matters, disputes with sellers of goods and services, inaccurate credit reports, billing disputes with utilities, landlord action that could result in evictions, government benefits, divorce, separations, annulments, citizenship matters, and the review of legal documents. She strongly encouraged retirees to have their wills drafted free of charge. For those living outside a 50-mile radius of the 5 boroughs, she suggested that you contact MELS for legal referrals in your immediate area. Contact MELS at 212-815-1111.

Finally, she shared that the Death Benefit for DC 37 retirees is \$2,000. Members were encouraged to update their beneficiaries, addresses and contact information by calling Health & Security at 212-815-1234 or going to the Benefits website at https://www.dc37.net/benefits/benefits_all. There is also a \$500 supplemental death benefit for Retirees Association members in addition to the \$2,000 issued by Health and Security. She also shared that Survivor's Benefits cover dependents for a period of twelve (12) months from the member's date of death.

She concluded by opening the floor for questions. She asked that Retirees contact her directly at 212-815-1368 or jgarcia@dc37.net. You can also visit: www.DC37.net or call 212-815-1234 for additional information.

Administratorship Update from Ann Widger

Ann Widger began her remarks by stating how heartbroken DC 37 Retirees Association is over the senseless killings of union member and VA ICU nurse Alex Pretti and Renée Good. She continued by stating what we're witnessing in Minnesota and across this nation is appalling — ICE raids that are terrorizing communities, families torn apart, and now the murder of multiple American citizens.

She encouraged retirees to attend a vigil for Alex Pretti that was being held on January 28, 5PM - 6PM at the VA NY Harbor Health Care System, 423 East 23rd Street. The Vigil was organized by Alex Pretti's union, AFGE, in collaboration with DC 37. For more information, members were encouraged to visit: <https://actionnetwork.org/events/vigil-for-alex-pretti>

She continued by sharing her dismay that Congress is currently considering six remaining bills to fund the federal government — all of which had to be passed by, Friday, January 30th at midnight to prevent a partial

government shutdown. Those six bills, including the Department of Homeland Security bill that funds ICE, have already passed the House as a package, but now await final passage in the Senate. She also shared that the Democrats are pushing for the Department of Homeland Security bill to be pulled from the package, and for Republican Senate Majority Leader Thune to allow the other five bills (including major AFSCME and DC 37 priorities such as funding for the Departments of Labor, Housing, Transportation, Health and Human Services, and Education) to pass with bipartisan support. She shared a handful of Republicans have now said they would support that approach, but it remains to be seen whether Republican leadership will sign off on the move.

She stated that in the best-case scenario, Leader Thune would strip the DHS funding bill from the larger package so that it can be renegotiated to rein in ICE, and the Senate could pass the other five bills by Friday. In that event, Speaker Johnson would need to bring the House back to pass these five bills so that they can be signed into law. In this scenario, there would be a very brief partial shutdown over the weekend that would not have much of an impact on our members. Negotiations continue, and this remains a very fluid situation.

She shared that DC 37 is also tracking the administration's federal freeze on childcare funding targeted at blue states, including New York. She stated we all know that rising costs are making it impossible for working families to make ends meet. Instead of helping them, the administration moved to withhold more than 10 million dollars in childcare funds for families in five states – Minnesota, New York, California, Illinois and Colorado. A court has temporarily stopped their plans, but more action is needed, and we need your help to make sure this critical funding reaches families. These cuts hurt children, families, and the thousands of AFSCME childcare providers, who depend on this funding to keep their doors open. She called members to action and asked that everyone to call their congress person and tell them, "Put kids first and protect childcare funding." She echoed earlier speakers encouraging members to consider participating in the DC 37 2026 Lobby Day on March 4th.

She also shared that the new Mayor's administration has recognized DC 37 talent and recruited from our ranks. Jahmila Edwards, former Executive Assistant to DC 37 Executive Director, Henry Garrido, was named Director of Intergovernmental Affairs and Odetty Tineo, former Political & Legislative Director for DC 37, was named Legislative Director for the new mayoral administration.

Finally, she stated that DC 37 and the Retirees Association stand in solidarity with New York State Nurses Association who are on strike. She shared that nurses are standing up for patient care by ensuring safe staffing ratios, protection from workplace violence, and ensuring patients have a qualified nurse at their side, not AI. She encouraged members to join them on their picket line.

Financial Report from Terri Brady

Terri Brady stated that our current membership has increased to 26,356. She shared that resources continue to be managed effectively with a strong focus on fiscal responsibility. She stated that the financial reports are posted on the Association website at dc37retireesassociation.org. If you have any questions, please contact us at 212-815-1781 or via email at dc37retirees@afscme.org.

CLOSING REMARKS

The meeting was adjourned.