



Mail Handlers Local Union No. 323

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Minutes of the Local Union 323 Council Meeting ST. PAUL, MN September 28, 2012

Jeff Larsen

Local President

Kathy Schultz

Vice President

Dean Abatte

Recording Secretary

John Frey

Treasurer

State Executive

Board Members

Shane Ryden

Minnesota

Brock Engstrom

North Dakota

Branch Presidents

Dean Abatte

Minneapolis

Gerald LaBarre

St. Paul

Mike Straiton

BMC

Gary Tollefsrud

Fargo

Local President, Jeff Larsen called to order the Local Union 323 Council at 12:00 P.M. Recording Secretary Dean Abatte took roll call.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Local President: Jeff Larsen

Vice President: Kathleen Schultz

Recording Secretary: Dean Abatte

Treasurer: John Frey

MN State Representative: Shane Ryden

ND State Representative: Brock Engstrom

BMC Branch President: Mike Straiton

St. Paul Branch President: Doug Vitek (via phone telecon)

Minneapolis Branch President: Dean Abatte

Fargo Branch President: Gary Tollefsrud

First action was to set up the Telecon for St. Paul Branch President Doug Vitek who requested to attend the meeting offsite.

Review of the Previous Minutes:

The Council reviewed the minutes from the last meeting on May 23, 2011. MN State Rep. Shane Ryden motioned to accept the minutes of the previous meeting and was seconded by VP Kathleen Schultz. The motion carried.

Presidents Report:

President Larsen provided the Council a copy of the President's report. (See attached copy).

Local Activities

- Northland District labor Management Meeting
- NALC Convention
- 2012 National Convention
- Political Activity

- Open Season Preparations
- Local 323 Dental Program
- Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA)
- National Agreement Status

Branch Activities

- Labor Management Meetings
- Current Status of Proposed Consolidations
- Staffing Issues

Officers Reports

St. Paul Branch President Doug Vitek reports:

Clerk Excessing St. Paul P&DC

Our installation has 17 Full Time Regular Mail handler residual duty assignments placed into the withholding pool. Effective October 6, 2012 it is anticipated that (17) seventeen Clerks will become Full Time Regular Mail handler craft employees and placed into those residual vacancies.

We have been discussing Overtime, Holiday Scheduling and Daily Job Assignment issues with Management to insure a smooth transition. I have been working closely with President Larsen regarding this transition as new employee orientations are preliminarily scheduled for October 1-3, 2012. Our goal of course is to sign up (17) seventeen new Mail handler Union members.

FSS Safety Patch

The Attachment 1 in our RI399 facility inventory reflects that Mail handlers are assigned as the primary craft to clear jams on the ITC. Unfortunately Mail handlers in other FSS sites around the country sustained serious injuries and the Postal Service temporarily directed Maintenance Craft employees to clear those jams behind the chains until a safety patch was put into place.

I am pleased to report that after several months of follow up all of the safety patches have been put into place and Mail handlers have resumed clearing jams behind the chains on the ITC. Training is also being provided to those Mail handlers that recently bid into the FSS Unit.

Casual Employment

The Postal Service has ramped up their efforts to employ casuals in the St. Paul P&DC. Casual cap issues and casual overtime issues are rearing their ugly head again. Our office is currently addressing a myriad of different casual related issues in the grievance procedure.

L&DC

Plant Manager Weber notified me that the Postal Service may shut down Tour 2 operations on

Sundays at the L&DC. Plant Manager Weber recently changed the fixed days off of (2) two vacant Tour 2 duty assignments in anticipation of that event.

Part Time Flexibles Conversions

My office has been working tirelessly in an attempt to get the Part Time Flexibles converted into Full Time Regular Mail handlers. Conditions are not working in their favor and they feel alienated and they are becoming very frustrated with the Union. In short, the problem lies within the Postal Services willingness to let these excessing events linger on for sometimes years. The Union would be well served by finding a way to expedite these events in an expedient manner.

NDC Branch President Mike Straiton reports:

Eighteen NDC Mail Handlers have retired (VER and otherwise) since June, leaving our Mail Handler complement badly depleted. Prior to the wave of retirements, twenty-four Mail Handler duty assignments have become residual vacancies over time through attrition. Needless to say, the Mail Handler complement at the NDC is badly understaffed. As the result of this, mandatory overtime has been required of non-OTDL Mail Handlers at oppressive levels and Part-Time Flexible Mail Handlers continue to be worked to the breaking point.

Some measure of relief is expected in late October and early November. Nine former Minneapolis Mail Handlers who had been involuntarily reassigned to the Des Moines NDC are now in the process of being reassigned to the Minneapolis / Saint Paul NDC. Five of them are expected here on October 20th, and the remaining four are scheduled to join us on November 3rd. Unfortunately, the relief that will be provided by our nine new brothers and sisters will not come close to easing the load that is currently burdening so many.

After we are joined by those coming from Des Moines, there will be 164 Full-Time Regular Mail Handlers, 12 Part-Time Flexible Mail Handlers and 3 Part-Time Regular Mail Handlers here at the Minneapolis / Saint Paul NDC.

Minneapolis Branch President Dean Abatte reports:

Mpls. Reports 160 FTR's and 9 PTF's. The recent VERA offer produced 25 retirements as of August 31st. Management reposted 10 of the 25 retirees' jobs for bid and subsequently only 4 of those 10 were reposted.

Reassignment

Last Month excessed Mpls. Mail Handlers in Des Moines IA were offered a chance to be reassigned to the Eagan NDC. Of the 25 employees, 9 accepted the reassignment. The conditions of this reassignment were worked out between President Larsen and the USPS and an MOU was reached and signed off on. A similar request for reassignment for those excessed Mpls. Mail Handlers in the outstate area (Rochester, Duluth, Eau Claire and Mankato) was negotiated locally between President Larsen and Local Management. Postal service Headquarters would not allow the reassignment and put a stop to the MOU. President Larsen went to National President Hegarty

for assistance. The issue was presented to the USPS at Head Quarters again and was subsequently denied.

After the last bid cycle, one (1) bid went residual. The opened the door for one Mail Handler to retreat to the Mpls. P & DC from Eagan.

The new bid results show all of the Mail Handlers in the system that have retreat rights back to the Mpls. Facility. This will continue for all future bid cycles until all with retreat rights have retreated.

PEER

Mpls. P&DC continues to participate in the PEER process. All is quiet currently as we do not have any active issues. We recently met with the District PEER committee where we were informed of the retirement of PEER Coordinator Chris Williams. The Mpls Committee was informed that he would not be replaced and that the committee would have to absorb his role for future issues.

District Diversity Committee

Recently I was appointed to the District Diversity committee to represent the Mail Handlers for the Local. The committee does important work getting the word out to employees and the community about specific issues like, Breast Cancer awareness month, Naturalization Ceremonies, Walk for the Cure, Food Drive, Vet's Day recognition and various other activities. This committee meets twice a Month.

AFCS-200 Jurisdictional issue

As has been reported, the Postal service has made a determination to award AFCS work that Mail Handlers have been performing for over 30 years to the Clerk craft. We currently have 15 Mail Handlers assigned to the AFCS unit. Early discussions with Plant Manager Erica Brix have not produced a timeline for the change in craft to occur. She has stated that they wait for guidance from Postal Service Headquarters.

We continue talks with Management regarding this issue and have outlined our position that the work should continue to be that of the Mail Handler craft. Any changes will produce grievances that will be vigorously pursued.

Treasurer John Frey reports:

Treasurer John Frey submitted his report (see attached Financial Statement) and asked if anyone had any questions.

Bylaws amended:

Section 12.1 Donation to Functions

*“Branches of less than 100 Mail Handlers may request up to \$20.00 per member for the purpose of holding a Mail Handler function (picnic, social event etc...) each calendar year. Each request shall be evaluated by the local President and funds **will** be authorized based upon the nature of the event and the anticipated number of members who attend.”*

Shane Ryden motioned to change the word “will” to “may”. The motion was 2nd by Kathy Schultz. 8 Yeas 1 no, motion carried.

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Section 12.10 Retirement

“Upon retirement of any member of this Local in good standing, with at least five (5) years of membership, a permanent memento of such service shall be presented to such member.”

“Upon the retirement of any member of this Local in good standing, with at least five (5) years of membership, a permanent memento of such service shall be presented to such member. A regular member retiring with 5 years of continuous membership immediately preceding retirement shall receive a \$75 gift card.”

Motion was made by Shane Ryden to accept new language 2nd by Gary Tollefsrud, motion carried.

Request to increase the Scholarship. A proposal was made to increase the current scholarship amount from \$500 to \$1000 annually. After much discussion and disagreement on the \$1000, a compromise was offered by Branch President Dean Abatte of \$750 annually. Local President Jeff Larsen amended his proposal to a request of \$800, Branch President Doug Vitek 2nd, motion carried.

A motion was made to adjourn the Council meeting by Shane Ryden and was seconded by Mike Straiton. Motion carries. Meeting adjourned at 1:27pm

General Membership meeting – October 20th.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dean Abatte
Recording Secretary Local 323
National Postal Mail Handlers Union

cc: **Local Union Council**
Branch Leaders
File



Mail Handlers Local Union No. 323

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September 28, 2012

Local President's Report

Local 323 Complement:

The current Local 323 career complement as of PP-19-12 is 633 (572 MN & 61 ND) with Membership at 619.

Local Activities:

- **Northland District Labor Management Meeting**

On July 19th I was in Minneapolis to join with Vice President Kathy Schultz and Recording Secretary Dean Abatte in attending the Northland District Semi-Annual Labor Management meeting. Topics included potential service standard changes, network rationalization, scanning, financial overviews, complement, PEER, and Postplan. This meeting was very informative and it provided us with information which can be relied upon in looking out for the best interest of our Membership.

- **NALC Convention**

Those of you who watch the events of the Postal world know that the National Association of Letter Carriers held their National Convention in Minneapolis during late July. I was lucky enough to spend part of a day as a guest accompanying National President John Hegarty. The NALC put together an impressive event and National President Hegarty addressed the Delegates to convey a message of solidarity on Postal as well as political issues.

- **2012 National Convention**

Treasurer John Frey, St. Paul Branch President Doug Vitek, and I served as Local 323's Delegates to the 2012 National Convention. This event was held in Portland, Oregon from August 6th through the 11th. The Convention proceeded in an orderly fashion and the Delegates heard from many speakers.

Jeff Larsen

Local President

Kathy Schultz

Vice President

Dean Abatte

Recording Secretary

John Frey

Treasurer

State Executive

Board Members

Shane Ryden

Minnesota

Brock Engstrom

North Dakota

Branch Presidents

Dean Abatte

Minneapolis

Douglas Vitek

St. Paul

Mike Straiton

BMC

Gary Tollefsrud

Fargo



The Delegates addressed numerous proposals to amend the Constitution. Of particular significance in this regard was the Delegates' approval of a change in the amount and the manner in which dues increases will be handled. First, in changing the amount of the dues increase following a general wage increase from \$0.50 to \$1.00 per pay period; and second, to provide a \$1.00 per pay period dues increase in years where a COLA or cumulative COLAs increase the base pay by more than \$500.00 per year during a year without a general wage increase. The change from \$0.50 to \$1.00 per pay period reflects the necessities of the economic times. This rate hasn't been adjusted for several decades.

The decision to base a dues increase on COLAs was somewhat more controversial. Having served as a Member of the Constitution committee I cannot hesitate to recognize that this resulted from seeking the middle ground in a manner consistent with our organizational values. Proposals had been submitted to immediately institute a dues increase without regard to wage increases, but these proposals were rejected by the committee. Our organizational values, or our philosophy, have always been that dues increases must be tied to a real increase in Mail Handler wages. That philosophy remains in place. In addition, the prohibition against more than one dues increase per year remains intact. It doesn't matter if there is more than one general wage increase per year or a combination of a general wage increase and COLAs, dues increases remain limited to one a year.

The National Convention also serves as the political primary for candidates seeking National Office. In this regard, National President John Hegarty, National Secretary Treasurer Mark Gardner, Central Regional Vice President Jeff Peppers, and Northeastern Regional Vice President Paul Hogrogian were re-elected by acclamation. Western Regional Vice President Rudy Santos faced an election but the challenger was recently disqualified by the National Judges of Election. Current Eastern Regional Vice President Sam D'Ambrosio and current Southern Regional Vice President Bruce Miller have announced their retirements; so, elections for those positions are currently underway.

- **Political Activity**

On August 22nd Vice President Kathy Schultz and I participated in a conference call with LIUNA General President Terry O'Sullivan concerning election strategy. The Presidential and Senate races as well as the 4th and 5th District Congressional races appear to be going in a positive direction for the candidates most favorable to our interests. To the extent that the labor movement deems it appropriate to contact our Membership in regard to these or other races, the National Union has provided the Minnesota State AFL-CIO with access to our mailing list. The State AFL-CIO may in certain races send a mailing to our Members with specific information designed to provide insight into where candidates stand on labor related issues. No dues money will be utilized for this purpose.

- **Open Season Preparations**

Local 323 is one again gearing up for another open season marketing the Mail Handlers Benefit Plan. In order to be well versed in the changes to rates and benefits the members of the Local 323 marketing team will be in attendance at this year's MHBP seminar.

This year's open season brings with it a new reimbursement program which has been instituted by the National Office. This program is designed to lessen the financial burden placed on the Local Union's by partially reimbursing some of the costs associated with health fair attendance. On August 29th, Vice President Kathy Schultz and I participated in a teleconference with the National Office in this regard and the extent to which Local 323 will rely on this program remains to be determined. At first glance the financial benefits of this program seem readily apparent, however, consideration must be given to the fact that the reimbursement of these expenses will reduce deductions related to our taxable income. The Local Executive Board will be evaluating this situation and discussing what would be the most prudent course of action.

- **Local 323 Dental Program**

In addition to the Mail Handlers Benefit Plan, Local 323 will be offering our Dental Program to the Regular Membership as well as Postal and Federal employees who chose to affiliate as Associate Members. This year's plan will be offered without an increase in premiums. Postings will be provided to the Branches and materials will be available on the web site prior to open season.

- **Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA)**

I'd like to offer my congratulations to the numerous Mail Handlers who chose to avail themselves of the recent retirement initiative. Retirement is the ultimate goal we all seek to achieve and it is always encouraging to see our fellow Mail Handlers cross the goal line.

- **National Agreement Status**

The National Union recently announced the appointment of Herbert Fishgold to serve as the neutral arbitrator concerning the impasse over the terms of the 2011 National Agreement. No schedule for conducting hearings has been released at of this date. Keep an eye on the bulletin boards and web sites for further information.

Branch Activities:

- **Labor-Management Meetings**

I have continued to attend Labor-Management meetings in the Minneapolis, the NDC, and St. Paul Branches as my schedule permits.

- **Current Status of Proposed Consolidations**

Not much has changed with respect to potential future consolidations since my last report. Currently, it appears that no action will be taken with respect to the consolidations until sometime in early 2013.

- **Staffing Issues**

The recent retirements have brought staffing in many facilities down to the bare bones. This is requiring many Mail Handlers to work numerous and often unwelcome hours of overtime. The Local Union has been working with the National Union in an effort to alleviate many of these situations to the extent possible. Recently, the Article 12 Committee at the national level signed off on an agreement which provided Mail Handlers excessed from Minneapolis to the Des Moines NDC with an opportunity for reassignment to our NDC. The people who accepted this opportunity will be reporting to the NDC during October.

Similar discussions have been concluded with respect to Mail Handlers excessed into Northland district facilities in the States of Minnesota and Wisconsin. The Union has already approved this agreement; but, management is having trouble securing permission from their superiors. The National Union is attempting to facilitate resolution of this matter.

The Saint Paul Branch is having clerks reassigned within the installation to the Mail Handlers craft. It is unknown at this time how long these clerks will remain in the Mail Handler Craft as management is obligated by contract to return them to the clerk craft at the first available opportunity.

The facilities of Grand Forks and Fargo are currently being hit hard as the result of inadequate staffing and I'm currently discussion options for addressing these issues with the representatives from North Dakota.

Upcoming Events:

General Membership Meeting – October (pending)

Fraternally,

Jeff Larsen
Local President

cc: All Branches
File