



Mail Handlers Local Union No. 323

1602 Selby Ave., Suite 5 St. Paul, MN 55104
(651) 646-2827 Fax (651) 646-0991 www.local323.org

Minutes of the Local Union 323 Executive Board Meeting

ST. PAUL, MN

December 27, 2024

IN ATTENDANCE:

Local President: Jeff Larsen

Vice President: Dean Abatte

Treasurer: Jarred Hoover

MN SEBM Representative: Shane Ryden

ND SEBM Representative: Brock Engstrom

Recording Secretary: Aaron Kobes

Local President Jeff Larsen called the meeting to order at 10:03 A.M.

Recording Secretary Aaron Kobes took the roll call.

Review of the Previous Minutes

The Board reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting on September 26, 2024. It should be noted that the mileage rate in the last meeting minutes from September 26, 2024, should be \$0.65/mile and not \$0.67/mile. ND SEBM Brock Engstrom made a motion to accept the minutes. The motion was seconded by Vice President Dean Abatte, the motion carried.

Local President's Report (see attached for full report)

- Local 323 Compliment
- Local activities
 - 2025 MHBP Seminar, MHBP Marketing and PSHB Program Transition
 - Semi-Annual Of the Local Unions (SAMLU)
 - Federal Employee First Alliance (FEFA) Retirement Seminar

Jeff Larsen
Local President

Dean Abatte
Vice President

Aaron Kobes
Recording Secretary

Jarred Hoover
Treasurer

State Executive
Board Members

Shane Ryden
Minnesota

Brock Engstrom
North Dakota

Branch Presidents

Dean Abatte
Minneapolis

Edward Yun
St. Paul

Aaron Kobes
NDC

Brock Engstrom
Fargo

- 2025 National Negotiations
- Arbitration Activity
- Computer Purchases, Implementation, and Updates to the Local 323 Website
- 2025 Steward Training Scheduling

Branch Activities

- October 1st – St. Paul Labor – Management Meeting
- October 7th – Computer Set Up – Minneapolis Branch
- October 19th – St. Paul Steward and Branch Meeting
- October 25th – St. Paul Labor – Management Meeting
- October 26th – NDC Steward and Branch Meeting
- November 1st – Meeting with NDC Branch Representatives
- November 13th – Meeting with NDC Branch President
- November 18th – Meeting with Minneapolis Branch Representatives and Grievant
- December 6th – Meeting with NDC Branch Representatives
- December 8th – Second meeting with Minneapolis Branch Representatives and Grievant

Upcoming Events

- Fiscal Year Change – January 1st
- Contract Proposal Deadline – January 31st
- Field Negotiating Committee – February 3rd through 7th
- Financial Management Training – March 4th and 5th
- Local Executive Board Meeting – March 28th (tentative)
- SAMLU – April 7th through 9th
- NPMHU Legislative Conference – May 13th and 14th

Local President’s Expense Report

Local President Jeff Larsen submitted for review his Expense Report. Vice President Dean Abatte motioned to authorize the Local President’s expenses for the time frame given and was seconded by Recording Secretary Aaron Kobes. The motion carried.

Treasurer’s Report

Local Treasurer Jarred Hoover submitted the Local’s Expenses and Profit and Loss Statements. ND SEBM Brock Engstrom moves to authorize expense account for time given by Treasurer. The motion was seconded by Vice President Dean Abatte, the motion carried.

Executive Officer’s Report

- Vice President Abatte reporting as Minneapolis Branch President gave an account of the numerous difficulties experienced and worked through with Mail Handlers during the Postal Service Health Benefit’s (PSHB) inaugural season, especially with regards to the authentication and account link up with Login.gov. Vice President Abatte then went on to discuss the potential expansion of marketing the Mail Handler Benefit Program (MHBP)

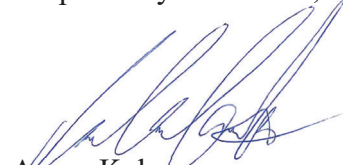
to the Carrier Craft and its benefits to the NPMHU. There has also been an increased number of issues within the Minneapolis P&DC involving managerial misconduct; specifically, supervisors yelling at Mail Handlers on the workroom floor. Additionally, there are several ongoing disputes within the Local Dispute Resolution Committee (LDRC), the APWU is filing grievances about Priority Mail in the basement of the facility, management has been coming in to work the mail, and there have been numerous filings on Cross-Craft.

- MN SEBM Ryden reported that there has been increased aid from Mail Handlers in the outstate facilities in the form of providing statements to assist in the processing of grievances at these facilities. Additionally, MN SEBM Ryden noted that there is an ongoing problem of MHAs either quitting soon after being hired or attempt to go to a separate Craft.
- Recording Secretary Kobes reporting as Minneapolis/St. Paul NDC Branch President stated that there were still ongoing issues with managerial misconduct within the NDC. There was also a concern raised for the numerous recent MHA hires being treated as “seasonal employees” and their potential separation after Peak Season with decreased mail volume.

Open Discussion

Vice President Dean Abatte motioned to adjourn the Local Executive Board Meeting. The motion was seconded by Recording Secretary Aaron Kobes. The motion was carried, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:44 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,



Aaron Kobes

Recording Secretary Local 323

National Postal Mail Handlers Union



Mail Handlers Local Union No. 323

1602 Selby Ave., Suite 5 St. Paul, MN 55104
(651) 646-2827 Fax (651) 646-0991 www.local323.org

December 27, 2024

Local President's Report Local Executive Board

Jeff Larsen
Local President

Dean Abatte
Vice President

Aaron Kobes
Recording Secretary

Jarred Hoover
Treasurer

State Executive
Board Members

Shane Ryden
Minnesota

Brock Engstrom
North Dakota

Branch Presidents

Dean Abatte
Minneapolis

Edward Yun
St. Paul

Aaron Kobes
NDC

Brock Engstrom
Fargo

Local 323 Complement:

The Local 323 bargaining unit complement as of Pay Period 25-24 is 749 (683 MN & 66 ND). Membership is 737.

Local Activities:

- **2025 MHBP Seminar, MHBP Marketing, and PSHB Program Transition**

To say that the transition of Postal employees from the Federal Employees Health Benefit (FEHB) Program to the Postal Service Health Benefit (PSHB) Program represented a challenge would be an understatement. Every Postal employee was transitioned from the FEHB Program into this new program. Many obstacles were not only expected but encountered along the way.

Knowing what lay ahead, Local 323 began preparations early. On October 8th, a preparatory meeting was held with the metro area health plan representatives. The purpose of the meeting was to identify the questions for which we would seek answers at the then-upcoming MHBP Seminar. This meeting produced no shortage of questions.

Subsequently, the Local 323 MHBP marketing team traveled to San Antonio, TX, for the seminar which was held on October 11th and 12th. In addition to myself, Dean Abatte, Brock Engstrom, Delicia Johnson, Mike Alvarez, Brian Blatchford, and Kathy Schultz, attended the seminar.

There were several questions which remained unanswered or for which we had less than clear understanding after the seminar.

Upon our return, preparations continued with several health plan representatives participating as "key contacts" in zoom meetings held by the Executive Director of the Mail Handlers Benefit Plan. I participated in 3 of these meetings. A dedicated resource page for the Postal Service Health Benefit Program was created and published on the Local 323

website. This webpage was updated throughout Open Season as additional information became available or was clarified.

The 2025 Open Season represented the first time that separate MHBP brochures were created for the FEHB Program and the PSHB Program. This was rather straightforward when marketing the MHBP at a Federal Agency or at the USPS. Employees at the Federal Agencies received the FEHB Program brochures and employees at Postal facilities received the PSHB Program brochures. This was different, however, when attending Open Season events sponsored by the National Association of Retired Federal Employees (NARFE). The membership of NARFE consists of both Federal and Postal retirees so it was necessary to provide both brochures. The Local 323 marketing team attended several NARFE sponsored events both before and during Open Season and having both brochures at one event created an interesting and new dynamic. Regardless, whether marketing the MHBP at a Federal Agency, a Postal facility, or at a NARFE event, a new framework has been created under which we will operate in the future.

“Official” Open Season ran from November 11th to December 9th for both the FEHB Program and the PSHB Program. Due to a significant number of problems being experienced with the implementation of the PSHB Program, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) extended the Open Season for Postal employees and annuitants to December 16th. This extension was granted after a request from the National Union as well as another Postal Union and following two consecutive weekends of OPM updating their computer system.

The 2024 Open Season turned into a bit of a sideshow; still the members of the Local 323 marketing team remained focused on pursuing our objectives. Their efforts during this difficult transition are greatly appreciated.

- **Semi-Annual of the Local Unions (SAMLU)**

From November 4th through the 6th, I was in Houston, TX, for the last SAMLU of 2025. The first day of the meeting included reports from National President Hogrogian, National Secretary – Treasurer Tabarus, Women’s Committee Chair June Harris, General Counsel Matt Clash-Drexler, and Legislative Director Katie Maddox. The second day consisted of MHBP reports from Schann Haliday and Nina Gallauresi, and reports from the Contract Administration Department as well as updates from the Article 12 Task Force and on RI-399. The third day was reserved for discussions concerning next years National negotiations. I have included a copy of the minutes from the SAMLU in the folder for this meeting.

Several items of significance were discussed regarding the Postmaster General’s 10-Year Plan. The first concerned the schedule for implementation. The meeting attendees were told that if a change to your facilities has not already been announced, it would

not occur until 2026. Locally we had been told that the NDC was slated for conversion to an RPDC in 2025 and now that seems to have been pushed down the road. Two other items relevant to Local 323 involve a determination by management that it is impractical to relocate any of the mail processing operations from the Bismarck P&DC, and a decision by management to create a Sorting and Distribution Center in Rochester. Implementation at that location is currently scheduled for September of next year.

- **Federal Employee First Alliance (FEFA) Retirement Seminar**

On November 3rd and 5th, FEFA held a retirement seminar in Minneapolis. I did not attend either session as I was in Houston, TX. Still, it is always good to provide the Membership with an opportunity to learn about and plan for their retirement. Additional FEFA seminars will be scheduled in the future.

- **2025 National Negotiations**

As has been previously reported, and as is well known, the 2022 National Agreement will expire on September 20, 2025. Two potential Cost of Living Adjustments (the second full pay period after the release of the January 2025 Index and the second full pay period after the release of the July 2025 Index) remain under the terms of the 2022 National Agreement.

On September 9th, the National Union issued a nation-wide call for bargaining proposals from Members and Local Unions. This provides every Member with a voice on the terms of our next contract. All proposals must be submitted by January 31, 2025.

National President Hogrogian has once again appointed me to the Field Negotiating Committee and I will be Washington, DC the week of February 3rd serving in that capacity. Formal bargaining will begin in June of 2025.

- **Arbitration Activity**

On December 12th, I appeared on behalf of the Minneapolis Branch in Regular Regional Arbitration. The grievances involved the emergency placement and first offense removal of a Mail Handler for an alleged violation of the “zero tolerance” policy regarding violence in the workplace. The hearing was completed, and the arbitrator has set January 10th as the deadline for the mailing of post hearing briefs.

Regular Regional Arbitration is currently scheduled to be held in the NDC Branch on January 27th. The primary cases involve the emergency placement and removal of a Mail Handler for an alleged violation of the “zero tolerance” policy regarding violence in the workplace. The backup cases involve the emergency placement and removal of a Mail Handler for an alleged violation of the “zero tolerance” policy regarding violence in

the workplace. I don't expect that a settlement can be reached in these cases and we're preparing to go forward.

- **Computer Purchases, Implementation, and Updates to the Local 323 Website**

The Local Union has been engaged in replacing aging computers in the metro area Branches throughout the year. Quite frankly, to call some of these computer's aging is rather kind. Changes to software subscriptions and email services have gone along with the purchase of new equipment. The objective was to put computers in place for the next 5 years and provide all representatives with their software needs on a more permanent basis. Implementation will continue as time permits and it may be necessary to purchase one (maybe two) computer next year.

Several changes have been made to the local website although some of them could be best described as being under the hood. A noticeable change involved an update to the forms contained in the Steward Database. The 2025 versions of our forms have been uploaded to the database and include two noticeable changes. First, a confirmation function has been added to all resettable forms to make sure that no data or pages are inadvertently deleted. Secondly, the document title has been disabled and the file name will now be displayed in the Acrobat window as well as the tab for each open form. For example, a user completing a standard grievance form will now see "MH-323-25 XXX Step 2 Appeal" (or whatever file name is used) as opposed to "Local 323 Standard Grievance Form." This will help with navigation when more than one form is open. Please encourage all Branch Representatives to use the updated forms and let me know if you run into any problems.

- **2025 Steward Training Scheduling**

NDC Branch President Aaron Kobes has requested training for the NDC Branch Stewards, and it will be scheduled for early 2025. Training for the Minneapolis and St. Paul Branch Stewards will be discussed with the respective Branch President during the first quarter of next year.

Branch Activities

Here are some excerpts from my calendar which involve Branch activities:

October 1st – St. Paul Labor – Management Meeting

October 7th – Computer Set Up – Minneapolis Branch

October 19th – St. Paul Steward and Branch Meeting

October 25th – St. Paul Labor – Management Meeting

October 26th – NDC Steward and Branch Meeting

November 1st – Meeting with NDC Branch Representatives

November 13th – Meeting with NDC Branch President

November 18th – Meeting with Minneapolis Branch Representatives and Grievant

December 6th – Meeting with NDC Branch Representatives

December 8th – Second meeting with Minneapolis Branch Representatives and Grievant

I've visited all the metro area facilities on many occasions since the last meeting of the Local Executive Board (probably to work on computers). I continue to assist Representatives with appeals and whatever else arises.

Upcoming Events:

Fiscal Year Change – January 1st

Contract Proposal Deadline – January 31st

Field Negotiating Committee – February 3rd through 7th

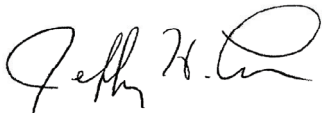
Financial Management Training – March 4th and 5th

Local Executive Board – March 28th (tentative)

SAMLU – April 7th through 9th

NPMHU Legislative Conference – May 13th and 14th

Fraternally,



Jeff Larsen
Local President

cc: All Branches
File