

AFSCME LOCAL 517 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES April 14, 2010 – 5:00 p.m. Meeting

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:05 p.m.
2. Progressive Dues:

Background information: At the 2006 AFSCME International Convention, a resolution was passed calling for all AFSCME local unions to institute a progressive dues structure effective January 1, 2011. If a progressive dues structure is not implemented by that date, then AFSCME International would automatically deduct 2% of a member's base pay.

Update to the resolution: A proposal has been submitted to AFSCME International by New York-area locals to amend the constitution and postpone implementation of progressive dues until January 1, 2013. International recognizes we're in difficult economic times and will read the amendment at the June convention. Delegates attending will vote to accept or reject the amendment. *Our local's members will be the ones deciding which vote our delegates take to the convention.*

We still need to be prepared to move forward with progressive dues in case the amendment does not pass. Our implementation date can be tied to the outcome of the amendment vote – either 2011 or 2013. Below are questions and comments from tonight's meeting:

How was 1.1% of base pay decided?

Back in January, a committee of several members attended a workshop on progressive dues. Based on payroll data received from the county and a formula developed by Council 5, it was determined that 1.1% would be needed in order to *maintain* our current budget.

Some dues are doubling and tripling. People are upset because they're being told to accept the 1.1% or else. What happens if we just don't do anything?

If you refer to the spreadsheet on the website, the left-hand side shows dues based on the committee's proposal. The right-hand side shows what dues would be if we did not implement a new structure by January 1, 2011. *Dues would only double or triple if we did nothing and the default of 2% took place.* We all agree that 2% is too high, so 1.1% was proposed in order to take in enough to maintain our current budget. The percentage is deducted from *base pay only*. Your overtime, mileage and any other expenses are not touched.

Why are dues increasing when we're not getting an increase? Why should I have to pay more because I earn more?

Not all dues would increase under a progressive dues structure. Some would stay the same and some would go down. A progressive dues structure is viewed as more fair because members who make less, such as part-time workers, would pay less.

If we go to a progressive dues structure, that will only hurt our Local as members will go fair share.

We recognize this could happen, but want members to understand this would impact future contract negotiations. Because of our strength in 2006, we were able to negotiate three straight years of both general increases and step increases. Poor economic conditions, along with decreased state funding, greatly impacted our current contract. This contract is only for two years

and next year we'll already be back at the bargaining table. We need to build strength for a better contract.

What have we done to cut our budget?

We've made the following changes:

- Eliminated "good and welfare" (memorials to members).
- Reduced training. Last year we sent a member to a women's union leadership conference. We are not doing that this year.
- Eliminated expenses by posting our newsletter Greenpiece on our website instead of copying and mailing.
- Eliminated monthly pay to one of our members to maintain our website. This responsibility was assumed by the recording secretary with no increase in pay.
- Officers have not had a pay increase for over 20 years. Current officer monthly pay is: President-\$35, Vice President-\$25, Recording Secretary-\$30, and Treasurer-\$40.
- At Council 5 they have numerous open positions that have not been filled. Those duties have been absorbed by current staff members.

Why are we sending five people to Boston? Why can't we just send one?

A decision was made to send five delegates and no alternates. This is down from eight that were previously approved (five delegates plus three alternates). There are many things that happen at the convention that are important for the development of our Local. Our delegates attend several training workshops and all of the general sessions. Votes are cast at the general sessions on amendments and resolutions that affect our operations. At the 2006 convention, voting took place on four amendments and 76 resolutions. The International and Council 5 conventions provide us with great opportunities for training, team building and networking.

It seems like AFSCME is political and I don't like my dues paying for that.

AFSCME is only political from the standpoint that they endorse candidates who support workers. It is not about being Democrat, Republican, Independent or any other political party. It is about supporting candidates who value public employees and the work we do. Your dues are *never* spent on political campaigns as it is against the law. If you want to support a candidate you have to donate out of your own pocket.

Some feel we are not getting results with grievances.

Compared to other locals we actually have a very good track record.

Members presented ideas for building unity:

- Put out questionnaires.
- Post minutes on bulletin boards.
- Include more detail on the agenda.
- Have evening meetings so more members are able to attend.

Christy stated additional members could be added to the committee to gather more input and generate new ideas on how to structure dues. She asked if anybody would like to be on the committee but there were no volunteers. (After the meeting adjourned, officers met and agreed that other options need to be presented at the May meeting. Christy has spoken to a couple of social workers who agreed to be on the committee.)

3. There wasn't enough time to cover the other agenda items. The meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Cunnien
Recording Secretary