

AFSCME Washington County Employees

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GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Wednesday, May 13, 2009

12:00-1:00 p.m.

Gov't Center-Board Room

PRESIDENT'S REPORT-For the Common Good

Well, since the last newsletter, we still don't have a new Senator at the national level. Hopefully very soon! The state employees have a tentative agreement which will be voted on next month. It takes awhile to prepare the ballots to mail to all state employees and then to count them all.

The Labor Management Insurance Committee has met once this year and hasn't received any RFP's yet. We will keep you up to date when some figures come in. Negotiations will be tricky this year and we (the E Bd and Field Rep) have been talking about it. Stay tuned for any updates. Also, please remember to use our website www.local517.org for union information. There are also other websites: www.afscmemn.org for all Minnesota AFSCME employees in Council #5, and www.afscme.org for AFSCME International.

Several of the E Bd members went to the Union Leadership Academy in Mankato, MN on April 24th and 25th. This was a wonderful opportunity to work on an organizing program for our Local and how to make contacts in each department in case we need to get information out in a hurry to all members, other than using email. The County only lets us use email for meeting notices and a few other brief notices. Our department is asking everyone to sign the Acceptable Use Policy and hand them in to supervisors. Seems that some areas aren't as current on some of these forms as others. They all get returned to H.R. This is a repeat of what the Union has been telling you all along: It's the County's computers, do not use for private business or non work related items.

I'm looking forward to a great summer and lots of blue skies. I feel the island calling me. I'm getting geared up for retirement next year and have started as a Leisure Travel Consultant for World Ventures, part time.

Union Women: Building Our Labor Movement

A MN Union Women's Leadership Retreat

April 22 – 24, 2009

First, let me thank all of you in Local 517 for supporting these kinds of activities. Your dues provided the needed support so I could take this opportunity to learn and grow. I also need to thank the St. Croix Trades & Labor Assembly/AFL-CIO for helping me fund this great learning experience.

You have been hearing gloom and doom everywhere about our economic situation in the U.S.; our own Governor wanted to cut public salaries, freeze wages and step increases, and mandate involuntary/unpaid furlough. But with help from Labor, in partnership with the AFL-CIO Fair Tax coalition, the Invest in MN group, and public input, Governor Pawlenty's short-sighted budget solutions were defeated. This demonstrates the power of the Labor movement – building coalitions so we can build the Labor movement and improve the lives of Minnesotans. As we demonstrated to the Governor, Labor will not cave under pressure; we will only get stronger.

To kick-off the very first morning of the Retreat, we got the news that the AFSCME State Employees Union had reached a tentative settlement with the State. The best part was that it did NOT require unpaid leaves, or cut salaries or all step increases, and left intact a \$125 State contribution to health care. Wages may not have increased, but under the present economic conditions this was a super settlement!! The whole room was cheering and clapping because we all knew that the State AFSCME group didn't cave and they paved the way for the rest of us with fantastic strength and a model for our own upcoming negotiations. The excitement was electrifying, what a wonderful way to start the conference.

We had great speakers for our opening convocation too. A panel of union women did "Sharing Our Stories," a very powerful and moving experience for all of us. The four woman panel had all experienced barriers and difficulties in their own union careers. One of my favorites was Elva Neubauer of SEIU/HC, an Allina employee. Elva started working at about age 14 in Mexico and doing some migrant work in the USA. The factory she worked at in Mexico used a lot of harmful chemicals and did not provide training or safety equipment for the women. She eventually protested the conditions at the factory and was fired and told by her employer that he would let all the other local owners know about her too, so she would never get another job in that town. Elva moved to California and began the long process of becoming a legal resident, getting married, starting a family, pursuing an education, and then raising a family as a single mother. During all these struggles she stood up for her fellow workers. She figured if she didn't who would? Now Elva is the President of her SEIU Local.

The other very inspirational panel member was Lois Jensen, formerly with the Union at Eveleth Mines. She was one of the first women in the taconite industry in Northern Minnesota and her story was portrayed in the movie "North Country." Lois endured years of vicious verbal abuse, scorn and physical and sexual abuse at the hands of her male union brethren. She finally filed a lawsuit that took many years and did untold damage to her family, her health, their finances, and left her as practically an outcast in her own community. She received death threats, her family members lost their jobs, and she sent her teenage son away to relatives to keep him safe. She brought tears to my eyes and to many of our sisters in that room. She suffered so much to bring better conditions to us all.

I was in the track on Building Coalitions with the Community. We had wonderful instructors from the U of M Labor Education Service and two women who are helping lead the way in coalition building, Candace Lund, Organizing Director for AFL-CIO and part of the Fair Tax Coalition and Ellen Perrault, who is with the Growth and Justice Coalition and Invest in MN.

We had the best group-of course I'm a little biased. The basic tenet in building a coalition is to bring seeming disparate organizations or agencies together around a common organizational concern. Take lowering health care cost as an example: the Union needs to help keep costs down so the employer can

afford to give them raises, keep the staffing levels high enough to provide good care, and get a decent contract; the Employer needs to keep costs down so they can meet their budget goals, not lose money, still provide a reasonable level of service, and stay in business; the Social Justice groups need to help keep costs down so workers can get the living wage they deserve, and keep the Employers solvent so they can afford those wages and provide a high standard of care for even our least advantaged citizens. It can be a win-win partnership on many levels.

The best for last – some ideas from Katie Farber, AFSCME Hennepin County, a great activist, organizer and really fun and funny woman:

If you can't push for wage increases in this economy that means it's the perfect time to push for contract language and work rules changes.

- things to better Labor-Management relationships, more cooperation
- more flexible work rules
- training
- allowing paid time for Union activities like meetings
- allowing the Union access to Employer email for sending Union notices
- time allowed for leafleting by Union representatives during work day

Barb Cysiewski
Local 517 Trustee

HEALTH INSURANCE COMMITTEE AND OTHER INFORMATION

The Washington County Health Care Committee met in April. We went over the experience (usages) of our employees and things looked good. We are within the margins for perhaps a good contract with the health insurers. Washington County is putting the health insurance out for bids this year. We will have another meeting in June or July to review the bids and will return to the membership with the news.

Respectful Workplace: Remember that you and a friend may have a great conversation at work, but the person several cubes down may think your chat is offensive. They may report you to management. Please be careful in not only what you say, but how you say it. There have been several investigations into matters like this recently.

One more reminder: **THE COMPUTERS ARE COUNTY PROPERTY, NOT YOURS.** Be careful to visit sites that are work-related only while on county time. Be mindful of what sites you visit over lunch.

Jeff Birttnen
Chief Steward



AFSCME LOCAL 517
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES
March 4, 2009

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 12:20 p.m.
2. Secretary's Report: There was a motion to approve the February minutes. M/S/C.
3. Treasurer's Report: Copies of the February Financial Report were distributed for review. There was a motion to approve the report. M/S/C.
4. President's Report: This is being moved to next month as Judie was out ill.
5. Chief Steward Report:
 - Day on the Hill: Becka Ault will now not be attending. There was a motion to approve Michelle Villanueva to attend the second day with lost time, parking and mileage to be paid. M/S/C. Kathy will send a notification email to H/R. Jeff said 400 AFSCME members are signed up for the first day and 600 for the second day.
 - There will be a lunch meeting at the Mongolian Barbeque on Monday, March 9, with John Ewaldt. A plan of action will be developed for visiting locations outside the Government Center for the purpose of converting fee payers to full members and increasing PEOPLE contributors. If you can't make the meeting he can come to your office. Currently 9.58% of our membership contributes to PEOPLE.
 - Judie sent a list of employees who are not paying dues to H/R and Council 5. She is waiting for a response.
 - Dakota County is becoming more active. Since Jeff will be retiring by 2010, it's important we continue being active so someone from Washington County can replace him on the Council 5 Executive Board as well as the Chief Steward position for our local.
6. Business Rep Report: This was moved to next month as Scott was unable to attend.
7. New Business:
 - Local Training – This is being moved to next month. Jeff said in order for us to take advantage of the two-day training that is available, we need to have 75% of the E-Board commit. A few active members can also attend.
8. Old Business: Moved to next month.
9. Good and Welfare: Moved to next month.

There was a motion to adjourn at 12:50 p.m. M/S/C.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Cunnien



AFSCME LOCAL 517 E-BOARD MEETING MINUTES March 23, 2009

The meeting was called to order at 11:07 a.m.

1. Swearing In: Bob Jaqua and Brian Huffman were sworn in as E-Board Member and Trustee, respectively.
2. Day on the Hill Outcome: The event was very successful and over 1,000 gathered at the Rotunda for the 1:00 rally on Wednesday. There were a couple of great outcomes as a result: 1) The co-authors of the bill to privatize fish hatcheries have withdrawn as co-sponsors. The only one left on the bill is the original author; without any support the bill will probably die. 2) Thirty members were slated to be laid off from the CD program in Carlton. Over 3,000 calls were generated, and the Commissioner of Human Resources called AFSCME and said they will re-evaluate. The program will continue for at least six months.
 - Barb Lunn discussed their meeting with Senator Ray Vandever. When the issue of fair taxation was brought up, he said it would only take care of \$1 Billion and he believes he pays too much in taxes already. Vandever is also for privatization. Senator Vandever was 25 minutes late and that made us 5 minutes late getting to Matt Dean. Rep. Dean wouldn't meet with the group because we were late. We did have a 45 minute meeting scheduled with him, but he chose to disregard the remaining time scheduled.
 - Barb Christianson said Day on the Hill expenses came to \$2,364.16 (she believes she has received all lost time and expenses). That is approximately \$1,500.00 less than last year. We had the same number of participants (12), but last year most attended two days instead of one.
3. National Library Workers Day is April 14. AFSCME wants to promote workers by handing out a special bookmark. Judie discussed it at the Labor Management Meeting this morning. Barb Lunn will talk to her Director to get approval to give out at the branches.
4. Workers Memorial Day is April 28 and Judie would like to find some way to celebrate (vigil, rally, memorial over lunch, etc.). The theme this year is Safe Jobs Now – A Change We Need. Judy W. suggested contacting Dave Brierley about doing a table. Judie will distribute information and wants a response by the end of the week.
5. Thank LGA Campaign: A donation was requested for this campaign which would be used for communications to prevent cuts to cities and counties. There was a motion to donate \$100.00. M/S/C.
6. For the Common Good Campaign: Posters were distributed at Valley Ridge and lots of members have them displayed in their cubicles. There are still posters available plus cards that members can sign pledging their support (the cards also help in getting email addresses). Judie also has green \$1,000,000 bills that can be handed out to merchants when shopping in their stores. The bills promote "AFSCME Buying Power" and that layoffs to public employees will hurt businesses and prolong economic recovery.
7. City of Stillwater Meeting: Judie met with employees as they were concerned after hearing that Department Heads are supposed to cut 5%. They were looking for encouragement and options. They're going to do a self-audit to show how reductions would impact service levels. Carole Gerst gave them For the Common Good posters to display.
8. LULA Update: Judie faxed our information to Council 5 on March 12. Training for the E-Board will be April 24-25 and she needs a commitment from each of us by the end of this week. The majority need to be able to attend in order to move forward. The International and Council 5 pay for training, meals and double-occupancy lodging.

9. Other:

- Financial Responsibility Training is April 1. Judie and Barb Christianson will be attending the full day and Brian Huffman a half day. There was a motion to approve their lost time and mileage. M/S/C.
- The Insurance Committee Meeting met last week. Financial Concepts is the broker hired by the county. There was approval to send out RFP's. We are in good shape with HealthPartners as far as our usage is concerned. It is best to be in the 70-75% range and we are at 74%. If another company undercuts HealthPartners, then they have the opportunity to respond. Terri Lutz will be sending out an email communication.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Cunnien



AFSCME LOCAL 517 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES April 8, 2009

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 12:00 p.m.
2. Secretary's Report: There was a motion to approve the March minutes as posted on www.local517.org. M/S/C.
3. Treasurer's Report: Copies of the March Financial Report were distributed for review. There was a motion to approve the report. M/S/C.
4. President's Report: This is being moved to next month as Judie was out ill.
5. Chief Steward Report. Jeff is on vacation but Scott reported there is one discharge filed at step three.
6. Business Rep Report:
 - It is still looking rough for Local Government Aid (LGA). AFSCME is still pushing for fair taxation of the wealthy. Scott distributed flyers to be posted on our bulletin boards.
 - Now is the time to contact our legislators. The outcome of the state budget will affect our negotiations. The county is already showing their hand as they have approached the 49ers, two Teamsters, Commanders and 911 Operators (200 total) about re-opening their contracts. No decision has been made. The Governor wants to freeze wages for state employees. We're the 10th leanest government.
7. LULA (Local Union Leadership Academy): Judie Atkins, Jeff Birttnen, Judy Wertheimer, Barb Christianson, Deb Myrvold, Bob Jaqua and Kathy Cunnien will be attending training April 24-25. There was a motion to approve lost time for one day (April 24) and mileage to/from Mankato. M/S/C. International/Council 5 will be paying for training, hotel and meals.
8. New Business: Barb Cysiewski gave an update on the St. Croix Valley Labor Assembly. Union members have been a great support in donating their skills and time for preparing United Way's new office space on Curve Crest Boulevard. They will be moving the end of May and welcome any assistance.
9. Old Business: None.
10. Good and Welfare: None.
11. Other: Barb Christianson will provide Kathy C. a Council 5 payroll calendar to post on the website so members know when to expect reimbursement for lost time. It's important to submit information to Barb as soon as possible. It's an involved process as Council 5 provides payroll support to 40,000 members, and there were 1,000 alone that went to Day on the Hill.

There was a motion to adjourn at 12:40 p.m. M/S/C.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Cunnien



AFSCME LOCAL 517
E-BOARD MEETING MINUTES
April 27, 2009

The meeting was called to order at 11:02 a.m.

1. The County has asked the other bargaining units to reopen their contracts (their contracts go through 2010). There has been no response yet. With our contract expiring in January, it is time to start putting together a negotiations team. The team will include Judie, Jeff, Kathy, Deb, Bob and Barb Christianson (if needed). Others will also be added in order to have a good representation of all departments. We will tentatively meet for an hour right after the next General Membership Meeting (May 13). Although the County is ready to start negotiating, we need to wait for the outcome of health insurance and the state budget. The Health Insurance Committee has sent out RFPs and they expect to hear back early June.
2. The E-Board attended LULA training this past Friday and Saturday. We developed a plan of action to establish a network of leaders in order to expedite contract information. Kathy is assembling a list of members which will include their department names and locations. This should be completed by May 15.
3. Barb Cysiewski attended the women's leadership conference at Rutgers and will write an article for the next newsletter.
4. Jeff talked to Jon Grebner at Council 5. There will be a phone bank on Tuesday, May 5, starting at 5:30 p.m. There were 17 Democrats that voted against the budget and it is important that we gain their support. There will be six phones for calling members and asking whether they would be willing to contact their legislators. If so, then they will automatically be transferred to the appropriate number.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Cunnien