

Pavement Pounder

BRANCH 111 N.A.L.C. "THE WASATCH BRANCH"



Publication 2020.08

August 2020

Midvale - Millcreek - Murray - Northwest - Orem - Sandy - South Salt Lake - Sugarhouse - Tooele - West Jordan - West Valley

The President's Report

Testing, Testing, Testing...

The United States Postal Service has started to change under the new Postmaster Louis DeJoy. None of us should be surprised by this, every Postmaster seeks to "leave their mark" on the Post Office, and we have been very fortunate to have enjoyed a period of growth and relative "peace" under the leadership of Megan Brennan, who even delayed her retirement when it became apparent that by doing so she could help the Postal Service transition.

The first change that we saw from our new Postmaster General was a Delivery Operations Test which started abruptly about three weeks ago. The NALC was given nearly no notice that this test would occur, and President Rolando was extremely disappointed that the Postmaster General had not reached out to him for input. In fact, President Rolando stated that the NALC would have been happy to have jointly explored looking at better ways to deliver the mail.

Then, last Thursday, we were shocked to hear that the Postal Service was removing a large amount of Collection Boxes in Montana and Oregon and in some eastern States. The news storylines I saw were:

"Residents of Portland and Eugene, Oregon were shocked to learn at least 31 mailboxes had been taken off the streets on Thursday."

And:

"NBC Montana confirmed with the Montana State Association of the National Association of Letter Carriers the orders to remove 13 boxes in Missoula, 9 in Bozeman, 3 in Lewistown and 30 in Billings."

These collection boxes were removed without any notice or warning. When a collection box was removed in front of Senator John Tester's office in Bozeman, Montana (and after discovering the extent of the massive collection box removal) he stated:

“These actions set my hair on fire and they have real life implications for folks in rural America and their ability to access critical postal services like paying their bills and voting in upcoming elections,”

With enormous public outcry on social media, news reports, and phone calls to congress and to the United States Postal Service, the news reported on Friday (the very next day):

“After the removal of dozens of mailboxes in several states set off a social media panic and high-profile blowback this week, the U.S. Postal Service has suspended all such operations nationwide. ‘We are not going to be removing any boxes,’ USPS spokesman Rod Spurgeon told NBC News on Friday. ‘After the election, we’re going to take a look at operations and see what we need and don’t need.’”

So here is what we know at this moment. The new Postmaster General is starting to make some changes in the Post Office. Again, this should not come as a surprise to anyone, in fact I would have been more surprised if he had done nothing. The attempted change to collection boxes, which looked like a “Shrink to Survive” tactic (AKA “let’s shut our doors in the face of our customers” tactic), reminiscent of the tactics we endured under Postmaster Patrick R. Donahoe, was immediately quashed by public outcry, as it should have been. Hopefully the Postmaster General learns a valuable lesson from this, perhaps along the lines that the United States Postal Service is in fact a “service”, and not a “for profit corporation”, and when you attempt to withdraw that service from the citizens of the United States, they will not abide it.

However, the Delivery Operations Test is proceeding, and I have a few things to say about that. The test itself is fairly simple: Carriers in Sandy Main, Murray, Holladay, and Sugarhouse have been asked to case their letters and flats (with some exceptions) in the evening, and those letters and flats will then go out with the next day's mail. This means that they on a given day, Carriers prepare parcels and chunks in the morning, and case up only a few pieces of mail that the Postal Service has pre-determined to be cased that day (this is a bit different in each office). Carriers then deliver their routes and return at the end of the day to case the bulk of that day's flat and letter volume. They then leave this cased-up mail in their cases for the next morning, when it goes out with the next day's parcel and chunk deliveries.

One huge problem with this test is that the Postal Service arbitrarily decided to change start times much later (8:30 or 9:00AM depending on the day), even though the truck schedules have not changed. This negates one potential benefit (having Carriers out carrying mail in the cool of the morning, and casing during the hottest part of the day), because with the later start times Carriers are getting out at the normal time, carrying until nearly dark (or after dark), and then returning to case their mail after the hottest part of the day is over. Many carriers in these four offices have told me that because of the later start times they are having to carry mail during the hottest part of the day much more often than in years past, and because of the long hours (many of the carriers in this test are working maximum hours), they are having to be even more cautious about “heat-related” injuries.

The Union will file the necessary grievances during this test. The violations we have already witnessed are the start time issues, violations of maximum hours and overtime distribution (improper mandating), Carriers working off assignment, and dignity and respect issues. My advice to the Carriers working in these offices (or any Carrier working in any office that is struggling with long hours, heat, or Pandemic-related issues). Be conscious of your safety at all times. If you become overheated or too-fatigued to continue, or are having health issues, call the appropriate person (911, Supervisor, Union Official, as the case may be), and take care of your own health first and foremost. Follow instructions if it is safe to do so, and the Union will deal with any contractual violations as they arise, even before they arise if we are able to do so, just make sure you are letting your Steward know about any problems.

Thank you (again) for being at work during these difficult times. Please keep doing the right things regarding Covid-19 safety. The rate of positive tests for Branch 111 Letter Carriers is still amazingly low. This has been an extremely tough year for the members of this Branch, and I have been continually surprised by how resilient and tough our members have been from crisis to crisis. Yes, the Postal Service has decided to test us in the middle of a Pandemic, and we will get through it.

Michael Wahlquist – President—Branch 111, NALC

NEW MEMBERS , March-August 2020: Melisa Elizondo, Zebulun Keith, Steve Anzora, Joann Roth, Omar Guerrero, Mary Hegland, Gypsy Willis, Matthew Sampson, Kiki Chamberz, Brian Whipple, Liliana Samaniego, Steven Cortez, Brent Oscarson, Kenneth Buck, Stockton Martinez, Michael Hoppus Ming Li, Janet Perez, Cody Knaus, Andres Diosdado Padilla, Joshua Ronek, Marc Vatsend, Brooke Wittig, Letia Butler, Codi Autrey, Angel VelizGillian Ellis, Jessie Springer, Jacob Lewis, Domenick Lepore, Dick Kunz, Grace Alder, Jesus Gonzalez, Jacob Ruff, Soana Katoa, Jesus Wallace, William Zika, Kason Thornock, Devin Dunn, Eric Watford, Charles Fraser, Jacob Godfrey, Shanelle Mortensen, Chris Da Silva, Bradley Di Iorio, Todd Gilbert, Meleena Morley, Aspen Read, Mason Andrews, Carissa Gonzalez, Kai Larsen, Brian Morris, Matthew Lingwall, Elijah Redman

Now What?

This is without a doubt the craziest summer I have experienced at the Postal Service. As if the Covid-19 pandemic wasn't enough to try and manage, we are experiencing record heat, a new delivery initiative test (ESAS), case consolidation, a new PMG, and news stories and commercials at every turn about relief packages and an upcoming election. It is a lot to deal with all at once.

My fellow Carriers and I in Sandy were selected as a test sight for the Expedited Street/Afternoon Sortation (ESAS) test. Sugarhouse, Murray, and Holliday were also selected. Although I have heard each office is having a different experience with the test I can speak to my experience in Sandy. Moral is at an all time low. Changing start times to 9:00 AM on Mondays and 8:30 AM the rest of the week has disrupted lives in too many ways to list. Not to mention the inevitable contract violations that come with the later start time. The test is a 30-60 day test that has evolved over the last 3 weeks. When it began we were told that our morning office time would be no more than 30 minutes. Our caseable mail was to next day all we had to do was prepare our chunks, grab our trays of DPS and flats, then load. Before the test even began it was changed to leave the mail you cased in the afternoon in the case to be pulled down in the morning after chunks were integrated with the flats. Makes sense. It only took a few days for management to inform us that we needed to case first class mail in the morning along with our chunks. That makes sense too and I agree we shouldn't be delaying mail. The problem is that we are still expected to leave the office in 30 minutes in the morning, even though we are casing first class flats, 99 letters, chunks and pulling down all the mail. Obviously, it is taking longer. The only real change in Sandy is that we case our third class mail in the afternoon after returning from the street. Well, that and of course our start time.

It will be interesting to see if after the test is complete if things go back to normal. Now with case consolidation on the horizon and so many uncertainties with the new PMG. We face unprecedented times. I know we have been through tough times in the past and we always make it through. It is important that we stick together. I expect things to get crazy in the next few months as we push through the election. Hang in there.

In Solidarity

Mike Hansen, Vice President—NALC Branch 111

NEW MEMBERS , March-August 2020: Valelia Toleafoa, Juan Chavez, Fernando Palafox, James Zubko, Michael Canada, Coby Walsh, Robert Baird, Shireen Hosseini, Simon Mann-Gow, Michael Dunning, Eric Martinez, Christopher Lutz, Dylan Peterson, Owen Thorpe III, Christopher Wood, Jeffrey Jex, Jack Matheson, Mitzy Ocampo Flores, Catherine Casson, Melissa Nielson, Mark White, Winter Inglefield Alex Jensen, Clayton Webb, Richard Farnsworth, Nathaniel Day, Josh Silverton, Devon Porteous Renato Nery, Michael Strong, Britney Malone, Jason Melk, Samantha Miller, Christopher Richardson, Jerome Nicolas, Kelton Whittaker, Tyler Eldredge, Giovanni Vernazzani, Samuel Bece, Nemo Miller, Sailendra Lamichhane, Harold Ellison, Ansjalee Broschinsky, Joseph Cook, Calvin Ao, Ricardo Castro, Ricardo Agustin Ramirez, Regan Pilimai, Javier Salinas, Tressie Bohorquez, Jackson Spector

NALC BRANCH 111
Minutes of the Regular Union Meeting
August 13, 2020

The meeting was conducted on the Internet using the Zoom software.

Convened at 6:30 pm

Pledge of Allegiance conducted by Mike Simonsen

Roll Call by Steve McNees

Moment of Silence: Sheila Keller , Charles Granger, Adriaan Groos, Harry Yensen, Dick Holt, and Frederick Lund who have passed away recently.

Minutes of the February meeting were posted. Without objection, they will be filed for future reference.

Reading of the Communications by Steve McNees.

See attached list. Communications will be filed for future reference.

Application for Membership by Mike Hansen

To be posted in the Pavement Pounder. See attached list

LCPF by Josh Thibodeau - Not present

ORGANIZER by Justin Lindquist - Not present

LEGISLATIVE by Chad Mortensen

Many candidates have reached out for endorsement. Because we have not been meeting, they have been directed to the Central Federation of Labor and we will follow their recommendations. There is currently a TV commercial to support the Postal Service. This is partly supported by our LCPF fund (not union dues). Please reach out to Mitt Romney to support the Postal Service Emergency Act – S4174. We need to get our friends and family members to call for support also. Yesterday a House Bill was proposed that would freeze the Post Office from enacting any service changes. It will likely stall in the Senate.

TRUSTEES – Chad Mortensen

They reviewed three months of financial records. Everything was okay. A couple of minor issues were cleared up by Mike Madsen. Any member can contact the union office to be able to review the financial records.

OWCP, COMPENSATION by Bob Jewell

The biggest problem is getting doctors to say what OWCP needs to receive. Give Bob a call and he can walk you through the process. If he doesn't have the answer, he can get it.

HEALTH BENEFITS by Jim Kerekes

The Covid virus is a very serious problem. Please take care of yourself and make the best choices for you and your family. Jim's contact information is on the back of the Pavement Pounder if you have any questions.

SAFETY AND HEALTH by Chris Zambos – Not Present

DIRECTOR OF RETIREES by Jeff Asay.

There have been several retiree deaths in the last few months. As far as Jeff is aware, none are from the COVID virus. Most retiree activities have been cancelled or postponed due to the virus including the Retiree's Dinner, Steve Ingram was awarded his Gold Card at his home.

TREASURER by Mike Madsen – not present

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT by Mike Hansen

999 grievances filed so far this year. Steward training is 6:30pm on the 19th. Masks and social distancing will be observed. The new ESAS (Expedited to Street Afternoon Sortation) testing and case consolidation will be discussed and how to file related grievances. · Sandy Main, Holladay, Sugarhouse, and Murray are doing the ESAS testing. In Sandy, start times are 8:30 to 9:00am. Procedures have evolved over the last 3 weeks so that mail is now left in the case overnight with 1st class mail being cased in the morning and chunks sorted into the flats before pulling down and leaving (much like before). Third class is curtailed until the afternoon. There are lots of problems with improper mandating of overtime. All 4 offices are filing lots of grievances. Murray will be starting at 7:30 on Saturday and 8:30 on Mondays.

SPECIAL GUEST – Joey Wiscomb from MDA

The MDA offices have been closed for the virus. Only remote location contact has been happening. The Muscle Walk and other activities have not been happening.

PRESIDENT by Mike Wahlquist.

The Steak Fry and Retiree's Dinner have been cancelled. · The ESAS testing is going adequately well in Murray and Sugarhouse. It is not going well (catastrophically) in Holladay and Sandy. Part of the problem is likely because Sandy and Holladay were understaffed before the test began. The test will likely last 60 days. Grievances being filed because of the test: start time, improper curtailment of mail, Article 41 (not getting 8 hours on their own assignments), crossing crafts (management casing or carrying mail or assigning it to other crafts), Article 8 (not maximizing the ODL before mandating overtime). There is a lot of mandating at Sandy Main and Holladay with lesser amounts in Sugarhouse and Murray.

· Politically the main push now is to get the Senate to include postal funding in the next stimulus bill. Channel 2 news may interview Mike tomorrow. If you haven't written your Senators yet, now is the time to ask them to support us in the next stimulus bill. · COVID-19, wear your mask, maintain safe social distancing, and use sanitizer when touching things outside of your control. We have had an amazingly low rate of positive COVID test in our branch (less than 1% of members). When there is a positive test in an office, Mike Wahlquist or Mike Hansen attend the standup the following morning. · Phil Rodriguez, the State NALC President has work opportunities for retirees with some computer skills to help with Get Out the Vote. They will work 40 hours per week and be paid at the City Carrier Rate (T-6). The duration is not finalized. If interested, send your name, branch #, cell phone and email to Phil at prodriq@msn.com.

SPECIAL ORDERS: none

NEW BUSINESS: none

A motion to purchase a new refrigerator for the union office not to exceed \$750 was made and seconded. Motion passed 23 for and 2 against.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

2 bylaws changes were read in at the February meeting. They are to be discussed and voted on tonight.

It is proposed that we eliminate the position of the Executive Vice President in Branch 111, and all attendant references in the Bylaws. A motion to amendment was made to keep both VP positions. The Executive Vice President position would do all that the bylaws require for both VP positions aside from training. This would be a salaried position. The Vice President would essentially be the director of education and paid out of the President's 120 days. Both would be elected positions. The amendment passed 24 to 4. The motion as amended passed 23 to 4.

Any approved budget cannot exceed the estimated revenue for the year. Seconded. The vote to cease discussion was 19 for (not 2/3 required). At this point attendance dropped below 30 members so there was no quorum and business could not proceed.

GOOD OF THE ASSOCIATION: nothing

IMPROVEMENT OF THE SERVICE: nothing

DRAW AND ADJOURN – 8:43 pm

- \$25 drawing winners: Bob Jewell, Chris Shipley (was not present), and Sean Phillips (checks to be mailed)
- RETIREES – \$125 (Steve Shaffer was not present). Next month it will be \$150
- PROGRESSIVE A - \$225 (Jerry Jensen was not present). Next month it will be \$250.
- PROGRESSIVE B - \$550 (LaTonia Barber was not present). Next month it will be \$575.

NALC HEALTH BENEFITS

Jimmy Kerekes

In my last article I presented this question: A Federal employees' spouse is not a Federal employee. If they have no dependents, can they both have Self Only coverage under the FEHP program active or retired? The answer is no.

When a Federal employee retires, and signs the section on the retirement papers where a spouse gets a survivor annuity, then after the death of the Federal employee the spouse can get Self Only coverage. Sending OPM a copy of a death certificate of the deceased, then OPM generally will change enrollment from family coverage to self only coverage.

Also, certain spouses may qualify to enroll in a health plan under the FEHP program. This is through the Spouse Equity Act of November 8, 1984. You can look that up for the details. It's called the Civil Service Retirement Spouse Equity Act of 1984. (Public Law 98-615).

Next issue question(s). Does the number of enrollees affect your premium costs? Who else has a big role in this question? Are there others who have a role?

AFL-CIO Convention nominations were suppose to happen in the April meeting. It is assumed at this time that the Convention like all other events is being postponed until further notice.

Branch 111 officer elections are coming up at the end of the year. Nominations will be held in the October meeting.

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The financial records of the Union are available to be looked at by any Branch 111 member, in the Union Office, by appointment.

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**EXC. VICE-
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Bylaw pending
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The
“Pavement Pounder”
is the Official Publication of
Branch 111 NALC
the
“Wasatch Branch”

Mon— Fri. 8:00 AM—6:00 PM

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