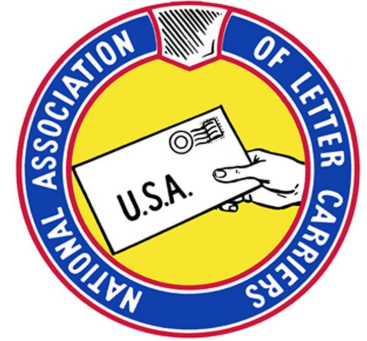


Pavement Pounder

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



Publication 2020.09

September 2020

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

ZOOM UNION MEETING

October 8
6:30

1. Go to zoom.us on your computer or download the Zoom app on your phone
2. Click Join a meeting
3. Enter Meeting ID 989 001 1306
4. Change your screen name to your name
5. Click "Join"
6. Password: OCT111

Log on early to avoid any issues logging in.

The Uniform Bank at the Union Hall desperately needs donations. Recently retired? Call the Union Hall and we will come pick those uniforms up or come in and see us with your donation. Did you recently get some new Uniforms and don't know what to do with the old stinky blues? Don't debate, donate to the Uniform Bank.

The President's Report

90%

Congratulations are in order. Branch 111 has passed the 90 percent mark in organizing! (for those of you who are new to the Union, the term “organized” refers to how many people out of the entire workforce are members of the Union). About a week ago, Branch 111 Secretary Steve McNees told me that he thought that we had passed the 90 percent organized threshold in Branch 111, based on the dues check-off numbers. Of course, we get the official numbers from the National Business Agent’s Office, so I sent an email to Michael Keels, who is the Regional Administrative Assistant in charge of organizing. He responded later that day with the official organizing number for our branch: 90.05 percent organized. Six years ago, the goal of hitting 90 percent seemed like a remote possibility at best, because in the spring of 2014 we were sitting at 81.90 percent organized. We have increased over 8 percent in the last six and a half years, which is amazing, to say the least.

I want to thank Justin Lindquist, the Branch 111 Organizer, Jeremy Bailey who has backed him up, and the numerous Carrier Academy Instructors, Shop Stewards, Former Branch 111 Organizers (Jay Reupena, Lance Henrie, Destiney Carrillo, Travis Richeson and others), and all the members of Branch 111 who have been diligently working towards getting the non-members in their offices signed-up for the Union. I don’t have space in this article to list all the people who have helped with organizing by name, and please forgive me if I have forgotten someone, but to all those who performed the hard work of getting people signed-up for the Union, thank you! Now on to the new goal of getting the Branch 95 percent organized!

Yesterday we had our second Branch 111 Union Meeting via “Zoom”. We did this because Salt Lake City still has a meeting restriction of 50 people, and we felt that the best way to comply with that restriction, and protect our membership, was to have meetings via Zoom. Unfortunately, we did not have 30 people attend (the necessary number for a quorum), so we were unable to conduct any Union business. I feel that this may have been due to the information on how to log-in to the Zoom meeting not being as accessible as it was for the first Zoom meeting (we did obtain a quorum for that first Zoom meeting). I have asked the editor to once again put the meeting information on the front page of the Pavement Pounder in hopes that the October meeting will achieve a quorum so that we can conduct the business of Branch 111. There will be a link to the Zoom meeting accessible through the www.branch111.com website as well.

Even though Covid-19 cases are on the decline (both in the State of Utah, and in Branch 111), I am still getting quite a few calls about the CARES Act Leave, as carriers are still experiencing quarantine situations, or where they have symptoms and are seeking a diagnosis (A COVID test), or where Carriers have family members with symptoms, or active COVID, and are wondering what to do.

As I approached the porch with the mail wearing my personal clothing , I heard, “Who are you and why are you on my porch?” I quickly pointed to the mail truck parked down the street and handed the mail to the costumer. There I was out there without a uniform. Please take the time to stack up your old uniforms or an other postal gear your not using and help prevent the “Who are you?” moment for new carriers.

As I have stated in previous articles, there are many options available to Letter Carriers during the pandemic. You can always use your own leave to be away from work. Also, the NALC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the USPS granting CCAs 80 hours of additional leave that may be used for issues relating to the Pandemic. After that agreement, Congress passed the Families First Coronavirus Response Act which grants 80 hours of additional paid sick leave to all employees to deal with issues regarding the Pandemic (Please see the Families First Coronavirus Response Act for the details), and also grants up to 12 weeks of additional leave to care for children whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable). And should you find yourself with active COVID-19, the Post Office will put you on Administrative Leave while you recover. In short, if you are unable to be at work due to issues relating to the pandemic, you should communicate those issues to the Union and to Management; There are options available to you. Please don't call out sick for several months without contacting your Supervisor or Station Manager (or the Union), as lack of communication can often cause misunderstandings, which could cause problems down the line, even serious problems such as being removed from the Post Office. I know that sounds far-fetched, but it has happened, albeit rarely. If you are having COVID related issues, or other health issues, and you have any questions about what to do, please give me a call, or talk to your Shop Steward.

Michael Wahlquist – President
Branch 111, NALC

Here We Go Again

As we enter into September most of us carriers welcome the fall season and the relief from the brutal heat. September also means that the increase in mail volume building up to peak season has already begun. I expect this peak season to be especially difficult. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic many consumers will choose not to brave the crowds and they will do most, if not all, of their Christmas shopping from home. I have a feeling our package volume will be record setting. Not to mention an election that is on our doorstep that will surely overload us with political mailings and hopefully a record number of mail in ballots coming and going.

After the year we have had it seems that many carriers that were contemplating retirement have decided to pull the trigger and not endure another peak season. I believe October and November we will see an unusual number of retirements and, in turn, many long overdue conversions of our CCA's. Which is a great thing but is going to leave management scrambling to hire new CCA's before Christmas arrives. Undoubtedly, hours are about to increase drastically for our CCA's. For many of them they already know what is coming but the new CCA's that are exiting the Carrier Academy every week are going to need our help. Please help these new CCA's during this very difficult time. Encourage them and please help them learn. I know when I was a new PTF years ago the help and encouragement from the veteran carriers in Bountiful was invaluable. The mail must go through, and it will.

In Solidarity,

Mike Hansen, Executive Vice President, NALC Branch 111

Hello! I want to begin my first article by saying how excited I am for this opportunity to represent the Branch and its members. I am also looking forward to working closely with the stewards and providing their training. I am always open to suggestions the stewards are interested in seeing training on, so please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

I also want to remind the stewards and officers that the October Steward training/dinner has been cancelled due to ongoing CV-19 issues.

As we move in to fall, election and peak season are right around the corner. With that, comes extra responsibilities and precautions for us as carrier. I want to touch on a few of these briefly:

Political mail- when dealing with the political ads we have started to deliver and anticipate in the upcoming weeks, please remember not to put it in the UBBM. Political mail should be individually marked up (vacant, insufficient address, etc.) and placed in a separate designated location. If you are unsure, please ask management where they have designated it to go.

Estimates- as the mail/parcel volume grows, more emphasis will be given to our estimates.

Whether management is trying to hold us to our pre-peak season times or trying to push us to perform faster because they have more routes to cover makes no difference. We are still entitled to and responsible for giving our estimates. There is no need to engage in an argument with management during this process. If you are going to be over 8 hours, complete a PS form 3996 justifying the overtime. (Type 3996 reasons for a list of 50 plus justifications.)

Remember, management can ask us for justification, but they cannot force us to give a different estimate. If they do not like your estimate, they can always follow you on the street. If management is determined to turn the estimate process into an argument, do not engage in it. Simply explain that you have given your estimate/justifications and let them know you need time to speak to your steward.

Recently, I have been hearing complaints and witnessing management not giving enough time to split a route. This puts the caser in a precarious situation as they need to determine which piece is going to be heavy, and ultimately which carrier is going to be screwed over. This is a manipulation tactic, and a successful one at that. Instead of playing their game and allowing them to be successful at it, inform management you need more time to split the route. Split the route the best you can with the time allotments you have been given, and let management know you have a piece left over and how much time it is. If management tells you to add extra to the pieces you already have, make sure you are correcting the PS form 3996 to reflect the new time. Too often, the caser is being blamed for giving overly heavy pieces where in reality management is shortchanging the route being split.

Finally, take care of yourself and your team. I have a feeling we are gearing up for another peak season comparable to, or worse than, last year. Try to be understanding if your coworkers are ill or unable to work. Many people are experiencing mental illness due to the pandemic. Returning to a workplace where coworkers are upset with them for taking care of their or their family member's health is detrimental to their well-being. Maybe try offering support by asking if they are doing ok. I also encourage those who are struggling to reach out to EAP (800-327-4968) and remember, your first visit is on the clock. We are all in this together and we will get through it together!

In solidarity,

Amie B. Gallo, Vice President

In the last issue I posed 3 separate questions about the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program (FEHB). Repeated here, they are:

1. Does the number of enrollees affect your cost of premiums?
2. Who else has a big role in this question?
3. Are there others who have a roll?

Answer to the first question is yes. Questions 2 and 3 will give details of the first question.

Question 2: USPS Employees fall in a different category than other federal employees. So, for the Post Office employees, OPM must determine the FEHB program-wide weighted average of premiums no later than October 1, immediately preceding each FEHB contract year, (contracts are made yearly that's why we get to have open season every year). The law directs OPM, first to multiply each health plan premium for the upcoming year by the number of enrollees enrolled in that health plan as of the previous March 31 who received a government contribution. OPM will then divide the total of premiums associated with each option separately (Self only, Self plus one and Self and family) enrollments by the corresponding total number of eligible individuals with each type of enrollment, to derive the weighted average of premiums.

So, to clarify this last bit of information, for example Self only total enrollees are divided by the number of self enrollees by the previous March 31 deadline and a weighted average is determined for the option of Self only enrollees. Then the other options are figured the same way by themselves. So OPM plays a with big role in the FEHB by setting our premiums weighted averages.

Question 3: Again, others do play a roll. Our NALC negotiated contract with the Post Office. Our premium (employees share) is decided by percentages agreed to through the bargaining procedure. So, in Article 21 section 1 of the NALC contract it tells what percentages are being used for each year of the contract. In contract years 2006-2011, percentages went from 85% to 80% in 2012.

In contract years 2011-2016, percentages went from 83.5% in 2013 to 79.25% in 2016.

In contract years 2016-2019, percentages went from 76% in 2017 to 73% in 2019. The lower the percentages the more the employee pays.

This last question has many answers. IT can contract negotiations, or decisions by an arbitrator, could be congress, board of governors, or the type of people in charge and the decisions they make.

So, by sometime after October 1, 2020 you can go to the government website and see the weighted averages posted along with the premiums for 2021.

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NALC BRANCH 111
Minutes of the Regular Union Meeting
September 10, 2020

The meeting was conducted on the Internet using Zoom software.

Convened at 6:38 pm

Pledge of Allegiance conducted by Mike Simonsen

Roll Call by Steve McNees

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

Reading of the Communications by Steve McNees.

Josh Wright submitted his resignation as the shop steward in the 17 zone in Holladay.

Application for Membership by Mike Hansen

Grace Lamoreaux, Rachael Chatwin, Samantha Leupolu, Bridget Holden, Debra Kirby, Joshua Belka, Samuel Hamm, Christopher Bordenave, Tadjia Garrard, David Morgan, Samuel Clark, Richie Andrade

SPECIAL GUEST – Stormy Simon

Stormy Simon is running for office in the Utah House of Representatives, District 21 (Tooele area).

This is her first time running for office. She worked her way up to president of Overstock.com then worked in the medical cannabis industry, working with children who had cancer. She is on the Democratic ticket but considers herself non-partisan. She feels we need diversity on the hill (party, gender, and thought).

LEGISLATIVE by Chad Mortensen

· Stormy has received the endorsement of the AFL-CIO Utah and the Northern Utah Labor Council.

· It is busy legislatively. Lots of people reaching out for our support. The AFL-CIO Utah and the Northern Utah Labor Council are helping several good candidates. · Saturday Sept. 26th the AFL-CIO is putting on another Job Fair in Price.

Chad will be there to represent the union and USPS. · Reach out to family members and people on your route that stop to thank you. Ask them to call their Senators and ask them to support the Postal Service and the Postal Emergency Act. ·

Mitt Romney seems to be our hope. · Chad and President Wahlquist participated in the Post Office rally at the Downtown Post Office last week. Wahlquist was interviewed by a TV station. Postcards were stamped and ready to go to Mike Lee and Mitt Romney for everyone attending.

TRUSTEES – Chad Mortensen

All trustees met Saturday and reviewed 3 months of financial books. Mike Madsen has the books in order and very organized. There are a couple of minor issues to get clarification on from the Executive Board.

LCPF by Josh Thibodeau – not present

ORGANIZER by Justin Lindquist – not present

MBA, OWCP, COMPENSATION by Bob Jewell

Been busy. One problem is doctor's narratives of injuries and the doctors not connecting their injuries to their work.

Members getting hurt should call Bob so he can instruct them on how to get their doctors to write the injury narrative properly to avoid having their claims denied by OWCP. This is a big problem.

HEALTH BENEFITS by Jim Kerekes

Open season will be this November and December. Jim is available to help with open season. Call him at 801-577-6033 (number on the back of the Pavement Pounder). He can meet you at the union office or help on the phone.

· Jim has an interesting article about health insurance in the Pavement Pounder this month. · There will probably be no health fairs this year. Online will probably be the best way to analyze any changes you may need to make.

SAFETY AND HEALTH by Chris Zambos – Not Present

DIRECTOR OF RETIREES by Jeff Asay. – no report

TREASURER by Mike Madsen

Working in the office is lonely this year. He is not paying many bills because we aren't having any activities.

VICE PRESIDENT by Amie Gallo

· Excited for this opportunity (newly appointed as Vice President).

· Steward training is next Wednesday at 6:30pm. · We are currently planning to cancel the Steward Dinner in October.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT by Mike Hansen

· 1,120 grievances so far this year. Mike, Mike, and Amie have been busy closing, entering and filing grievances. They are pretty much caught up. · ESAS test– they postponed it and now have cancelled the test. They are working to get start times back to original times (almost there). About 50 grievances were filed in Sandy during the 28 days the test lasted.

PRESIDENT by Mike Wahlquist.

No business can be conducted because there has not been a quorum to conduct business.

· Positive COVID test results have been very low in our branch. Still, many are quarantined. Orem, Mountain Shadow, was the only office this week with a positive test. People must be doing the right things even at home. · The state positive numbers are also going down, as well as the death rate.

· Emergency sick leave under the CARES Act: If you are quarantined, or sick and seeking a positive test, or you are caring for someone with COVID-19, or your child is out of school with no day care available and nobody to watch them, then you can put in for Emergency Sick Leave under the CARES Act. If you do test positive, you are placed on Administrative Leave until such time as you no longer have symptoms for three days and are able to return to work. · There are many options available if you are having issues with COVID. Call the office for more information.

· About a week and a half ago, a carrier was facing discipline. He was not even aware that the situation he was going through was covered by emergency sick leave under the CARES Act. · There have been a lot of CCA conversions to full-time positions lately. · National confirmed that our branch is now over 90% organized for the first time (90.05% organized). That is fantastic! In 2014 we were at 81.9% organized.

At this point in the meeting, there are too few logged on to constitute a quorum, so we cannot conduct any business.

SPECIAL ORDERS:

A Bylaws change previously read, was read again:

· Any approved budget cannot exceed the estimated revenue for the year.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: none

NEW BUSINESS:

A motion was approved by the Executive Board to “**donate \$5,000 to the Food Bank**” from money saved from cancelled activities. Without a quorum, a motion to donate the money could not be made.

GOOD OF THE ASSOCIATION:

Kerekes – Auto TSP enrollment for new employees will be effective Oct. 1, 2020 at the 5% level (currently 3%).

IMPROVEMENT OF THE SERVICE: nothing

DRAW AND ADJOURN – 7:17 pm

- \$25 drawing winners: Destiney Carrillo, Brent Bray (checks to be mailed)
- RETIREES – \$150 (Harry Weir was not present). Next month it will be \$175
- PROGRESSIVE A - \$250 (Haydon Titus was not present). Next month it will be \$275.
- PROGRESSIVE B - \$575 (Christy Silver was not present). Next month it will be \$600.

Notice of Nomination and Election of Branch Officers

Elected offices are for a term of three (3) years. Elected offices to be filled:

President, Executive Vice President, Vice President, Secretary, Secretary-Treasurer, Sergeant-at-Arms, Health Benefits Representative, MBA & Compensation Specialist, Safety and Health Representative, Director of Retirees, Trustees (three).

Nominations of officers will take place at the October 8, 2020 meeting.

All nominees must accept the nominations in person, by letter, or by proxy (email, text, and by phone are acceptable). The election by secret ballot shall be conducted prior to the December meeting.

No member shall be eligible for nomination to hold more than one elected office at one time within the Branch.

Self-nomination is permissible. No person shall accept nomination for more than one office.

Upon nomination, every nominee must certify that he or she has not served in, or applied for, a supervisory position for the twenty-four (24) months prior to being nominated. [If self nominating by phone, mail, text, email, etc., this statement should be included]

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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-PRESIDENT
Mike Hansen
VICE-PRESIDENT
Amie B. Gallo
TREASURER
Mike Madsen
SECRETARY
Steve McNees
SGT-AT-ARMS
Mike Simonsen
MBA & OWCP
Bob Jewell
(801) 244-0929
TRUSTEES
Chad Mortensen
Joan Larsen
Kirk McLaughlin

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