

Regular Meeting #4 Minutes - 11/15/2017

Meeting place: Kelley Gazzaro VFW Post, 1418 Plainfield Street, Cranston RI 02920

Members present: 31

Brian called the meeting to order at 6:05 with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Tim Ruell.

Roll Call of Officers: Brian Holt, Roger Johnson, Barbara Bouchard, Sue Evans, Donna Machala - all present.

Executive Board members present: Betty DiSalvia, Victor Giorgio, Joanne Keeling, and Don Taylor. **Excused:** Colleen Sherratt.

The Secretary is casting one vote for the entire election as no one ran in opposition for each position.

New Officer: Don Taylor as Treasurer, replacing Sue Evans.

New Executive Board Members: Shaun Branch, Greg Anderson, and Tim Ruell.

Point of Information requested by Cy Dumas. Thank you to the new folks who have stepped forward. I think each one should introduce themselves and discuss their backgrounds as not everyone knows them. Brian said we will get to this.

We had invited the District Manager to speak tonight, but he could not attend. We have Jay Killackey, our former national VP, with us to make a presentation on financial investments. We have Greg Murphy with us also to speak about the latest on the EAS pay talks and the recent meetings at HQ. I would like to recognize Kim Lewin, President of Branch 118, who is joining us tonight.

There were no first-timers to in attendance tonight.

I will ask the new eboard members to say a little about themselves. We will start with Tim. He has been with the Providence Plant for 13 years where he started as a mail handler and is currently an SDO for four years. He served 23 years in the Army. I am glad to do this. I thank all of you.

Greg Anderson has been with the Postal Service about ten years starting in New London, Connecticut as a CCA carrier. He was a 204B in Pawtucket, and Brian promoted him to supervisor in Warwick. He has worked in North Kingstown and North Dighton. I am currently the OIC in Swansea, MA. I'm excited to get more involved in NAPS and to helping get more members to join.

Shaun Branch started in 2002 as a rural carrier, then became a city carrier for 10 years. Brian promoted me to supervisor in Warwick. He just came off a detail as the OIC in Harrisville, RI. We do need to focus on recruitment.

Don Taylor started as a clerk in East Bay in 2003, then became a carrier. He became a supervisor and is current an Acting Manager in Riverside.

Brian thanked them and said we appreciate your stepping up, and you are right we need to fill the tables. We do have three newly promoted supervisors that were signed up recently. We need to make this a strong body again.

Barbara Bouchard gave the Secretary's Report. The only correspondence we received last month was from the Lt Governor for the State of RI regarding their National Guard Operation Holiday Cheer care package program for the troops which is coming up this weekend. According to the DCOs, we currently have 146 general members, 27 associate members, for a total of 173.

Motion to accept the Secretary's report: Made by Vic Giorgio and seconded by Roger Johnson.

Treasurer's report by Sue Evans: She had some computer issues so does not have a printed report to hand out. We only had \$1,355.55 in expenses in October which were the NY training which Don and Joanne attended and some speaker gifts. We are way under budget for this year. We budgeted \$23,439 for 2017, and our total expenses so far \$15,310.76. Our total assets are \$45,548.48. Our income so far this year is \$23,030.98. So that puts us in the black at \$7,720.22. We are in really good shape.

Motion to accept the Treasurer's report: Made by Vic Giorgio and seconded by Don Taylor.

Cy asked to speak on the motion. This is Sue's last meeting as the treasurer, I think we should give her a standing ovation. There was a well-deserved round of applause for Sue.

Roger Johnson gave the Vice President's report. Roger said there is one person in trouble right now with two letters of warning. We were able to get rid of the first letter. If you need to leave the building and you are not on Postal business, please remember to clock out. Brian said please let us know as soon as something happens. Don't wait until you have more than one piece of discipline as we do not always receive copies like we are supposed.

Brian asked Greg if there is any update on the SWCS testing being conducted in the NEA, and Greg said nothing yet. Brian mentioned getting calls about supervisors being forced to work on Amazon Sundays. We cannot use 204Bs if clerks are in the building. He has one supervisor who is being made to work every Sunday and that's not fair. But he does not have a resolution yet.

Brian said we have polo shirts available if you are interested. The cost is \$20 but the branch will pay half. If you want to order one, please see Barbara with your payment, size and color selection.

Donna Machala gave the Legislative Report. She read from NAPS Legislative Update - dated October 26, 2017:

Big Cuts in Civil Service Retirement Benefits Defeated...For Now

Federal and postal employees dodged a bullet aimed at their retirement benefits when the House of Representatives (HoR) refrained from including any retirement benefit cuts in the final

version of the Fiscal Year 2018 budget resolution.

The HoR approved the FY 2018 budget resolution on a 216-212 vote, following the Senate's approval on Thursday, Oct. 19th, of the same budget resolution on a 51-49 vote. Both close votes.

No instructions are contained in the budget resolution that would reduce federal and postal employment benefits, a remarkable outcome compared to President Trump's proposed budget and earlier House action.

President Trump's proposed budget, sent to Congress last spring, would have imposed nearly \$150 billion in retirement benefit cuts, eliminating annual cost of living increases for FERS retirees; lowered COLA's for CSRS enrollees by 0.5%; increased employee retirement contributions by 1% every year over the next 5-6 years; and eliminated annuity supplements for FERS retirees who stop working before they are eligible for Social Security benefits.

Considerable lobbying in Washington and the field by NAPS and other federal/postal employee and retiree groups over the past six months succeeded in whittling down the prospect of benefit cuts. Continued advocacy by NAPS and other groups through the Federal-Postal Coalition ultimately caused the Senate to decline to go along with the House and refrain from imposing any mandatory spending cuts, including civil service retirement benefit reductions in the budget resolution adopted last week.

A bill to seriously watch is H.R. 4182.

House Panel Approves Bill Doubling Feds' Probationary Period

A House committee voted Thursday to advance a bill that would increase the probationary period for most new federal employees, although Democrats argued the measure would degrade civil servants' due process rights. H.R.4182 would increase the probationary period for new hires to the competitive service and the Senior Executive Service from one to two years, and it would exempt time spent training new feds from that timetable.

Democrats on the committee said the proposal would erode federal workers' due process rights. And argued there was not sufficient evidence to prompt such a change in how the government hires and evaluates new employees.

Rep. Gerry Connolly, D-Va., said he was not necessarily opposed to the bill, but wanted to learn more about its potential impact on hiring and employee evaluation. He unsuccessfully sought to amend the bill to instead require the Government Accountability Office to study the issue and return to the committee with its findings.

"This may be a good idea, but we don't really know that yet," Connolly said. "There are a lot of unanswered questions about the efficacy of this proposal. I'm concerned about its potential impact on recruiting the workforce of the future, since some 40% of the federal workforce will soon be eligible for retirement...I'd like to see the evidence to see if making the probationary period two years is materially different, and what are the good and the bad impacts?"

Say Adieu to NAPSHQ2U ! (Farewell)

NAPSHQ2U started in September 2010. However, our reach has hit a plateau of membership interest. Much of the information shared in the monthly **NAPSHQ2U** newsletter is also available on our NAPS website and in *The Postal Supervisor* magazine. Therefore, to reduce

redundancy of information, but also guide and encourage members to visit the newly designed NAPS website. NAPS HQ elected to retire **NAPSHQ2U** after the December 2017 issue.

From NAPS Legislative Update – dated November 14, 2017:

Congress Enacts TSP Modernization Legislation

Occasionally Congress actually gets something done and responds to a legitimate, pressing need. When that happens, it's usually the product of bipartisanship and non-controversy. Those conditions existed in the past month on Capitol Hill as Congress passed legislation that gives federal employees and former feds/retirees greater control over their Thrift Savings Plan retirement accounts.

The new law, called the TSP Modernization Act, sensibly modified the rules over TSP withdrawals by giving TSP participants greater flexibility over how frequently they make withdrawals from their accounts. The change comes on the heels of surveys that showed TSP participants wanted to have greater withdrawal flexibility.

Until now, Federal employees had been allowed only one partial post-separation withdrawal upon reaching age 59-1/2 while employed, or one withdrawal after retirement. The new law will permit an unlimited number of such withdrawals.

The bill also eliminates: (1) the automatic annuity as a default option if the plan participant does not make an election to establish an annuity, and (2) the limitation on age-based in-service withdrawals.

The Senate cleared the measure (HR3031) on November 8, after it had passed the House on October 11. Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-MD) and Rep. Mark Meadows championed the measure, along with Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) and Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE). Awaiting President Trump's signature.

Updated information on this legislation: Since reporting this on November 14th, President Trump signed the TSP Modernization into law on Friday, November 17, 2017. Considerable lobbying in Washington helped to defeat the bill. Our advocacy can make a difference. The Trump White House is proposing a federal pay freeze for federal workers in 2019.

Brian Holt said he will be sending two members with Donna in March to the LTS legislative training. It's important to remember to contribute to SPAC which enables NAPS in these efforts.

Motion to accept the Legislative Rep's report: Made by Dave Girard, seconded by Vic Giorgio.

Brian reminded everyone to be sure and sign in and make sure we have your home email address. We use the sign-in sheets to verify your attendance at the meetings if you want to attend any training sessions.

Brian asked Don and Joanne to speak about the training session they attend in New York recently. Don said they were not prepared to discuss that tonight. They will speak on this at the February meeting.

We will break for dinner now at 6:40 P.M. and will resume with our speaker portion of the meeting shortly. The meeting resumed at 7:10 P.M.

Brian introduced Greg Murphy, Northeast VP.

This year four of the top five officers from HQ attended the board meeting in late October (PMG Meghan Brennan, COO, HR and VP LR and Consultative Manager). We have not had a good response in the past from USPS HQ, so this was noteworthy.

- The biggest highlights of the presentation were that presently, we are down 5.3 billion pieces and projected to lose 2.3 billion next year.
- About 15% of our Function 4 staff is not in the building during the highest volume times, so you will see some adjustments coming on this.
- Malicious compliance vs acceptable input; we were happy to hear this. Those morning reports are so cumbersome sometimes that supervisors don't have the time to address important things like why a carrier was out so late. We don't have time to address productivities either due to all the reports.
- We talked about whether there is a bank of hours out there that national or areas can give out to their favorites. We are not aware of this being the case anywhere.
- Another topic discussed was supervisor scheduling, where some are being told your scheduled day off may change next week. This has to stop. They should work to their form 50s.
- NPA, CTV has 60 people in cell 3 not getting a pay raise. There are impacts due to the hurricanes in TX, FL, VI and PR and the fires in CA and these are mitigating factors and will be addressed. There are 4,900 EAS not getting a raise. HQ said that is not acceptable so changes should be made to NPA.
- Pay talks - NPA is not going away but needs improvements. HQ waited a full 45 days after signing the NALC contract to begin EAS pay talks. Nothing has been released yet. They have brought in an outside consultant who is well-versed on private sector pay vs. government sector. We have until December 21st to get back to HQ.
- SWCS are being tested in six districts recording every task a supervisor performs. They did this with the use of relief supervisors. NAPS wants relief supervisor to cover Sundays and other supervisor days off. Some want the T-time, others want their day off.
- The NEA VP Ed Phelan has the Caribbean as part of his area of responsibility, so he has been dealing with that.
- Charlie Scialia reported there were 84 debt collections, MSPB cases of sexual harassment, and cases of unnecessary calls by supervisors to an employee's home. There are cases of credit card fraud. You cannot use these cards for your own personal use.
- NAPS is in good financial shape. There is no increase in dues anticipated since the last one in 2006.

- The National Convention is at Mohegan Sun August 6-10, 2018. Lisa Douglas from Hartford is the Postal Committee Chairperson. Transportation arrangements are being set up with Bradley and TF Green Airports.
- The New England Convention is May 17-20, 2018, in North Conway NH again.
- The LTS is in Washington DC March 11-13, 2018. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier tour will be on the Wednesday prior to.
- A three-year agreement was signed with Dillard Financial to provide good information to you to prepare you for your retirement. They provide this counseling and are better equipped to answer your questions than Shared Services.
- Charlie Sciala is done at the end of the year with DDF. We got four applicants and a selection has been made although a contract has not been signed yet.

Cy asked this last point is critical to our members. He's concerned this has not been firmed up yet. There are many serious cases going on.

Cy asked about Mohegan when and where will the sub-committees be assigned. Lisa has been reaching out. Greg has been making requests to NAPS HQ also. He'd like some feedback on souvenir bags or doing one good bag. He'd also like ideas for the design of the t-shirts for the convention. We want a unique design. Please share your ideas. I will filter out the information I get. Kim said we are also taking ideas for different activities around the CT line for people, such as visiting Mystic.

Mary Fontaine asked about RCAs being counted as employees in the SWCS study. Greg said right now we don't know if they will be or not.

Eric McCarthy asked when we will know about NPA? It just was released today.

Greg said one figure he did not mention was that prior to their board meeting, Amazon packages were down 146K in Boston as Amazon is delivering their own packages there. USPS is reaching out to Target and Walmart to deliver for them. We are also looking at delivering Priority Mail on Sunday's, but the NALC protested that would take work away from the regulars who do not work on Sunday's. Chuck said we just heard in our meetings with CTV that packages are up. Brian said some areas, such as Boston were down, but our area is up. Greg said we are losing so much from letters and flats being down, that the parcels are not making up for that revenue loss.

Victor asked going back to the NPA, some people are not getting a raise and now there's talk about a pay freeze in 2019? Brian said the President is talking about freezing government pay raises in 2019. Eric asked where's the incentive? Greg said that's a very good point. We hope the new contract will address that. Chuck said it seems that the cells are out of whack. Greg agreed saying we will probably see the number of cells shrink to ten or eight. NAPS made this suggestion to HQ.

Cy asked where the pilot districts were on the SWCs testing? CTV (Danbury and Bridgeport), NY, Northern NJ, and Triboro. Brian said Warwick was originally picked, but then taken off.

Greg Anderson asked if there would be any retroactive pay increase for those who have not gotten a pay raise in recent years? Greg Murphy said he did not know. Victor asked why if the fiscal year ends in September, we do not see the pay raise until January? Greg said because the pay raise is based on the calendar year, not the fiscal year.

The next speaker tonight is Jay Killackey who will present information on Dillard Financials. He said, I have left forms and my business cards on each table if you are interested in obtaining more information prior to your retirement. We provide help on your retirement. You should be in Thrift Savings. If you are, you will build a nest egg. At age 59.5 you can take it out of TSP and put it into another instrument. If you do that you can get into a program we have that is entirely safe. The market affects your TSP. As you get closer to retirement, you want your money to be safe and to grow. We are licensed and training on Social Security and Medicare. You also may have FEGLI. At age 45 and every 5 years thereafter, the premiums go up. You should get an alternative policy. We have fixed index annuity rates without fees up to 6%. We can give a personalized approach to make your TSP work for you.

Brian thanked Jay for his presentation.

Brian asked Greg to swear in the officers and executive board members for their new term.

Under new business, Brian appointed the Budget Committee: Sue Evans, Don Taylor, and Betty DiSalvia. He also appointed an Audit Committee: Genie DelSesto, Donna Machala, and Don Taylor.

Joanne Keeling said there were seven applicants for the Dean Ambrosino Memorial Branch Scholarship. We picked three names. The first individual has three weeks to submit proof of attendance. If that does not happen, we go on to the next name. Brian asked Kim to draw the first name:

- Jared M. Taje who is the son of Edward Taje, an SDO in the Providence Plant.
- The second name drawn: Gregory Conroy, son of Bob Conroy, In-Plant Support Manager.
- The third name drawn is Daniel Searle, son of Maureen Searle, also an SDO in the Plant.

The blue tickets are the raffle for the Stop 'N Shop gift cards. The red tickets are the 50/50.

- The 50/50 raffle was won by Rose Russo (the total collected was \$200 with half going to SPAC)
- The Stop 'N Shop gift cards were won by Tim Ruel, Cy Dumas, Rose Russo, and Lilca Velazquez.

Brian asked if there was any new business from the floor. Cy said that NAPS has been meeting here at the VFW for over 20 years. The Post does not charge us for the use of the hall. We only pay the caterer. Cy moved that our branch donate \$200 to the Kelly Gazzarro VFW #2812. Motion was seconded by Skip DelSesto, and all were in favor. Sue will send a check to the Post Commander Ron DiMaio.

Brian reminded everyone that our next meeting will also be held here on Wednesday, February 21, 2018, at 6 P.M.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Eric McCarthy, and was seconded by Victor Giorgio at 8 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Bouchard