

The Local Line

"A PPA Award Winning Publication"

The Official Voice of the
Northwest Illinois Area Local

Floor Edition

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Update by: Jackie Engelhart

Palatine Retreat Rights

Management has been following through on what we asked them to do, which was to send letters out to any Clerks who should have been offered retreat rights. In management's effort to notify those affected they report that several have retired or are no longer working for the Postal Service. Of those who were sent a letter none have responded. As far as I can see there is no reason why we cannot agree to begin retreating Clerks from the Mailhandler Craft at Palatine, the last group on the Lakeland List. I have informed Labor Relations that we are ready to move forward. Of the Clerks who were excessed out of Palatine only one has called me in the last year and that person no longer works for the Postal Service. That may be because they have retired or do not want to be returned. We have exhausted the names on the Lakeland Retreat Right List up to the last person returned. This has taken quite a long time for a number of reasons but we want to make sure its right.

When Clerks Return from the MH Craft...

We are well aware that most of the Clerks who were excessed into the Mailhandler Craft at a Palatine do not want to return to the Clerk Craft. I could not agree more that it is unfair that they do not have a choice but I do not make the rules but I do have to follow them. Our Local submitted a resolution to have this changed in the next contract and it did not pass at the last convention, but I spoke to President Mark-Diamondstein about this when he was here and he seemed to agree it should be changed. He spoke with one of the affected employees who told him she wants to stay a MH. I do not have the authority to do something that violates the contract no matter what my opinion. Some employees were already forced to return to the Clerk Craft from the MH Craft at Palatine and they wrote letters to the Plant Manager to go back to the MH Craft. They went back but they had to start a new period of craft seniority and they lost their saved grade. They expect that the rules will be followed for all.

Ask to go back to MH

As most of the employees in the MH Craft want to stay and as management will have to replace them, it seems that management will probably allow them to reassign back to the MH Craft if they request. That means that we may get to the bottom of the Retreat List faster for each employee returned to the Clerk Craft who requests to reassign back to MH. Some of these employees have been in the MH Craft since 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2010 and the last to return are those from 2005 as they are the juniors. It is not fair to force them back to the Clerk Craft five to ten years after they were excessed into the MH Craft and our Local agrees this should change, but it will not affect those who were already moved. In the meantime we have to be fair to the employees who were already forced to return to the Clerk craft and not ignore the rules for others who come after. Hopefully those that want to go back to the MH Craft will be allowed to. That would speed up the process of getting to the end of the list so we can start converting the PSE Clerks to career status.

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Special points of interest:

Palatine Retreat Rights
When Clerks Return from the MH Craft
Ask to go back to MH
APWU Contract to Arbitration
50 Mile Limit for APWU ok'd
MS-47, TFS Effective Dates
CS In-Service Custodian Test
Town Halls at Carol Stream
Busse Changes...
FEHB Open Season
Retirement...
NWIAL Christmas Gift

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APWU Contract to Arbitration

The parties were unable to reach agreement in contract negotiations and during the mediation process and so the final step is arbitration. APWU and USPS will be assisted by legal and economic experts as they present evidence and testimony to support their own proposals. The APWU did not agree to USPS proposals to eliminate COLAs as they currently exist, create a new permanent lower pay scale for future career employees and reduced benefits, and to increase the percentage of non-career employees. President Dimondstein said the last time we went to arbitration it took 13 months to get a contract.

50 Mile Limit for APWU ok'd

The APWU and USPS agreed on 9-28-15 to an MOU extending the Minimizing Excessing MOU until 5-20-18 or for the term of the 2015 Agreement. This MOU states APWU employees cannot be excessed more than 50 miles. We do not have a new contract but APWU was able to extend the 50 mile excessing limit until 2018.

MS-47, TL-5 Effective Dates

A national Step 4 settlement has established an effective date for facilities to change from the current MS-47, TL3 workhours and workforce to the new MS-47, TL5 version. The effective date would be day 1 of the first pay period after the custodial workforce has been trained and a new MS-47-TL5 staffing package is approved. The Local President or designee is to be provided a copy of the new approved MS-47. Currently we should be under the old MS-47. Custodians do not like the new MS47-TL5 cleaning procedures. Employees say that the new methods and supplies are designed for office not industrial cleaning so I want to investigate this further and have requested information from management on the new cleaning procedures being implemented.

CS In-Service Custodian Test

Carol Stream has posted a notice to all employees for In-Service Testing for Laborer-Custodian. Interested CS employees may apply to take the In-Service Exam 955 to establish a Register for the position of Laborer-Custodian. The opening date is 9-15-15 and the closing date is 10-16-15 for application and employees will be notified by email of the test date.

Town Halls at Carol Stream

Plant Manager Mike Kotula held Town Hall meetings on 9-29-15 on all three tours at Carol Stream to update the employees on how CS is moving in the right direction on productivity and service scores. He said CS is #2 in Great Lakes Area for EXFC. He said mail volume is down 10%. He also said they are planning to fix the problems that caused the CS flooding. There has been an increase at CS in Motor Vehicle accidents this year over last year and he said he wants everyone to go home safe. He is giving every employee a lunch ticket for the cafeteria to say thanks for their efforts in 2015.

Busse Changes...

Bids were posted on 9-17-15 for jobs reposted due to management changing non-scheduled days or the principal area of assignment. The union is not in the business of abolishing, reverting, or agreeing with management to change jobs. When they decide to change the non-scheduled days or the principal area of assignment the contract says they must repost the job. We filed grievances on the reduction of General Expediter bids on tours 1 and 2, and reduction of the APBS bids on tour 3 because they continually use Clerks from other areas to staff all of these jobs. Management is in the process of adding bins to the APBS machine but they have not added any bids. The Universal Sorter should be operational by early December.

FEHB Open Season

This years Open Season period to change your Health Plan for 2016 is November 9th to December 14. We will share dates when we get them but all three plants had one-day Health Fairs last year. Our Health Plan Representative Arlene Thomas-Benford will be at the APWU table at the Health Fairs to answer questions and tell what is new for the APWU Health Plan. During the Open Season for 2017 the FEHB will begin offering a Self Plus One Policy that will be for those who do not want to pay family rates to insure a spouse. The plus one person has to be someone who would be eligible under current family coverage rules. Rates haven't been set but it will be cheaper than a family plan.

Retirement...

We have a Retirement Seminar every year in the fall to help our members prepare for retirement. This year Retiree Director Judy Beard came from Washington DC to meet with our retiree members to start an NWIAL Retiree Chapter. It only costs \$36 per year to be a retiree member and be part of the new NWIAL Retiree chapter. There are currently 40,000 APWU retiree members nationwide and they are part of the front-line in responding to attacks on USPS, postal employees, and retirees. They know Congress can pass laws affecting their retirement, Social Security and Medicare.

NWIAL Christmas Gift

The EB and membership voted to buy \$15.00 Jewel gift cards for every dues paying member for Christmas. Some members say they would like a T-Shirt but we think the majority of members prefer the Jewel card. One idea we are looking into is to have new APWU T-shirts available for sale, at cost, as we do with the aprons. It's true that you can't show union pride by wearing a Jewel card.