



MAIL HANDLER UPDATE

NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

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COMMITTEE ON THE FUTURE MEETS



For 25 years, NPMHU's Committee on the Future has engaged in strategic planning over long-term issues that are confronting the Union over the coming months and years. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the 2020 meeting had to be canceled, although earlier this year the Committee released the Legislative Agenda for the 117th Congress to memorialize NPMHU's political and legislative objectives. The Committee did gather for a meeting, however, during the third week of June, which amounted to the National's first in-person group gathering since the November 2019 Semi-Annual Meeting of Local Unions.

The membership of the Committee on the Future is comprised of all members of the National Executive Board and various Local Union Presidents, currently including Kevin Tabarus of Local 300, Danny St. Marie of Local 301, Tony Coleman of Local 302, Perovous (Andy B) Badilishamwalimu of Local 310, James (J.C.) Morris of Local 317, Nick Mosezar of Local 318, Kelly Dickey of Local 322, Jeff Larsen of Local 323, and John (J.R.) Macon of Local 329. Also in attendance were Katie Maddocks, Political and Legislative Director; Teresa Harmon, CAD Manager; Nina Gallaresi, Executive Director MHBP; and Bruce Lerner, General Counsel. The Committee focuses on five key issues facing the NPMHU: USPS privatization; the legislative relations program; USPS automation and other technological changes; financial planning, especially for Locals; and membership recruitment.

Because the Committee's meetings have been reduced to one per year, the Committee made special efforts to focus its attention on the most pressing issues that threaten the Union's strength and effectiveness over the next few years. National President Paul Hogrogian started Committee discussions on the financial status of the Postal Service, focusing on deteriorating revenue, including pandemic-related changes, mail volume declines, and mandates to prefund retiree healthcare.

Reviewing mail volume trends, the Committee noted the continued decline in first-class and marketing mail. A glimmer of hope is provided by parcel volume, but much of this trend is caused by changes in behavior of business and residential consumers driven by pandemic restrictions. PMG Louis DeJoy has made it clear that USPS wants to capture and permanently retain this parcel volume. The PMG believes that the Service can compete

with UPS, Amazon, FedEx, and DHL. The Committee also discussed the USPS ten-year plan, which is a network redesign that will reduce underutilized machinery and create facilities dedicated to parcels, paving the way for increased parcel capacity. DeJoy also has proposed to transition to a more predictable and affordable means of transportation, using trucks to the exclusion of airplanes.

The Committee further analyzed the USPS plans to close or consolidate approximately 40 mail processing facilities that employ mail handlers. Employee dislocation and inconvenience or denigration of service resulting from these consolidations is unacceptable to the NPMHU. However, the Union does recognize some change may be needed to facilitate network opportunities and capture parcel volume. The Committee discussed this very fluid situation, noting the list of impacted sites changes almost weekly. Area Mail Processing (AMP) studies will occur in many locations. Various strategies for limiting or eliminating these consolidations were discussed, as were strategies for dealing with the impact on mail handlers should these actions actually be implemented.

The Committee also reviewed mail handler complement and membership trends. USPS has converted nearly 6,800 Mail Handler Assistants (MHAs) to fulltime regular (FTR) in the past 12 pay periods. Accounting for the most recent agreement to convert 6,596 MHAs to FTR no later than August 14, 2021, the NPMHU will have between 13-14,000 new career Mail Handlers this year. An increase in parcel volume cannot be accomplished without a sustained and reliable workforce. Simply stated, staffing shortfalls and employee turnover are contributing to the degradation in service. Negotiations with postal management have converted thousands to fulltime regular (FTR) because the NPMHU and USPS collectively want to avoid a repeat of the 2020 holiday season, when the Postal Service failed to meet service standards.

In 2020, the parties experienced the first peak holiday season that did not include casuals. When you also factor in staffing challenges caused by the pandemic and a major federal election, USPS faced the perfect storm. In the past, USPS typically reduced hours and terminated temporary workers in late December. Last December, however, the parties were negotiating conversions to career. It is expected that this year's conversions will stabilize the workforce and provide essential craft employees as we enter 2021's peak mailing season.

The Committee also discussed recent hiring and career conversions to analyze the impact on the Union's financial condition. For the past 9 years, the National Office has been operating at a substantial deficit, seriously depleting our financial reserves. National Secretary-Treasurer Hora presented year-over-year accounting figures, noting that 2020 was the only surplus year since 2012, while further explaining that 2020 was an aberration because of the coronavirus, reductions in travel and meetings, and other cutbacks. Any reserves that accumulated during the pandemic will quickly be depleted by NPMHU Conventions in the next two years: the delayed 2020 convention now set for August 2022 and the regular 2024 convention.

The Committee analyzed membership trends to improve recruitment of newly hired Mail Handlers. The Union's membership rate for MHAs continues to be meaningfully lower than for career employees. Given that more than one-third of mail handlers in the NPMHU bargaining unit are either MHAs or recently converted from MHA to career, these lower percentages are creeping into the overall membership totals. The Committee discussed these issues extensively, and agreed upon a multi-pronged approach to increasing membership totals, including:

- Ensuring that the Union is notified about and attends orientation programs, for new MHAs and new career conversions or transfers
- Disseminating lists of nonmembers to Locals
- Mailings to encourage membership focused on new hires, recently converted career employees, second appointments for MHAs, long-term scabs, and transfers from other crafts
- Using MHBP health plan options as an affirmative reason to join

The Committee also engaged in detailed discussions about ongoing subcontracting initiatives and automation changes, including the following:

- Automated Delivery Unit Sorter (ADUS) and Small Delivery Unit Sorter (SDUS)
- Enhanced Package Processing System (EPPS), essentially a larger APPS
- Universal Sorting System (USS)
- Automated Guided Vehicles (AGV)

The Committee also focused on the first year of the new 117th Congress, with Democratic control of the White House and both chambers. The NPMHU must make the most of this possibly short-lived advantage. Most important to the NPMHU is postal reform legislation. All postal unions have pushed various versions of reform legislation in previous years, but this year looks more favorable than the past. Notably, PMG DeJoy is working hard to add more Republican support for the legislation. The Committee's full Legislative Agenda is available at npmhu.org.

The next meeting of the Committee on the Future is scheduled for March 2022.



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