



Local 1321 News

Queens Library Guild, Local 1321, DC 37, AFSCME, AFL-CIO, 125 Barclay Street New York, NY 10007

Queens Library Guild Local 1321

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Note from the Acting President— “An M and 3 S’s”



John Hyslop
Acting President

One of the last concerns John Socha had for the staff before he retired was what he called the 3 S's – **Salaries, Staffing and Safety**. I would like to add an M to that list – **Morale**. When the 3 S's are negatively impacted – low salaries, inadequate staffing and poor safety – they lower morale. Unfortunately these issues continue to plague the library.

Salaries are abysmal. A number of articles have appeared in this newsletter about salary issues. The city must provide adequate raises to handle the rising costs of everything – gas, housing, groceries, entertainment and more. However, the library must help out. They made strides in increasing the librarians' salaries, but have done nothing for the rest of the staff.

Staffing is bad and it is getting worse. As of May 17, 2006, for example, 19 community libraries did not have ACLM's; almost all the community libraries do not have enough clerks, custodians and security guards. The **STAFF** is increasing

the library's circulation, hours, computer terminals, supplies, Internet access, books, programs, reference requests, websites and more. The **LIBRARY** is not increasing the staff. The table below shows a comparison with what we did in 1984-1985, over 20 years ago. Keep in mind we had 844 full-time and 340 part-time employees that year.

Currently we have between 700-800 full-time employees. The mayor should be ashamed to say that we need to be more productive!

The library seems to have two solutions. One is to increase technology which, as we know, requires a whole host of technical and non-technical support staff. Technology has helped handle many of the more time consuming processes, but it is not a silver bullet. Adequate staffing is. The library does not have enough clerks to handle the RFID processes. It does not have enough technicians to deal with all the technical issues of more RFID machines.

Another solution is to make staff do out-of-title work: Clerks doing librarian work, librarians doing clerical work, etc. The staff understands that when their library is busy, they need to work as a team. However, out-of-title work should only be a temporary solution, not a permanent job duty.

Safety is a problem that to be addressed.

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Workload Comparison: 1984-85 and Today

<u>Services</u>	<u>FY 1984-1985</u>	<u>FY 2004-2005</u>
Population Served	1,891,325	1,951,598
Holdings	5,036,799	6,839,385
Community Libraries	59 and Central	62 and Central
ALC's	0	6
Circulation	9,960,313	18,899,058
Programs	12,883	24,034
Attendance at programs	295,802	494,456
Reference Questions	3,369,587	7,652,299

Citywide Bargaining

On May 15, 2006, DC 37 and the city met for the sixth time to bargain our economic agreement. This agreement includes issues relating to the economics of our employment, including salary raises, longevity pay, welfare contributions and more. It also includes non-economic issues. The bargaining sessions include all the local presidents and their negotiating team on one side and all the agency representatives and their negotiating team on the other. The union has a list of demands and the city has a list of demands.

At this bargaining session, the city began the negotiations. They proposed a new salary increase, dropped one demand and set aside one issue for a subcommittee. DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts told the city that DC 37 members are tired of waiting for a new contract and that they want one soon.

The union caucused to discuss the city's proposal. The union did not think the proposed salary increase was enough and the members deserve more. We also believe that the city did not go far enough in modifying its demands.

In good faith, and to expedite the contract's resolution, the union agreed to drop seven major demands. This was only agreed upon after heated discussion about how important these demands were for our members.

After about an hour in caucus, the union and city met. Sister Roberts explained our position again, saying the members want this contract resolved. Our negotiator, DC 37 Research and



DC 37 Negotiations Director Dennis Sullivan, third from right, addresses city negotiations during the May 5 bargaining session.

Negotiations Director Dennis Sullivan, reiterated this point. He stated the union appreciated the city's offer to increase wages but was not "bowled over" by the economics and that our members deserve more. He then told the city, the union is withdrawing six demands at a great cost to our members.

The city's negotiator said they will caucus and that the union only dropped four demands.

The city returned after about 30 minutes and said they will drop two demands and said nothing else. Sister Roberts expressed the union's displeasure

with the city's negotiating tactics. After that, Brother Sullivan stated some goals he would like to see achieved in the next round of bargaining.

The city's negotiator said we will schedule another meeting, and walked out.

In the union meeting afterwards, everyone was upset at the city because the city did not offer enough of a salary increase; did not discuss welfare contributions; and was dismissive of our concessions.

As a first time observer, I do not know
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Acting President's Note *(continued from page 1)*

A number of serious incidents have been reported to the local. The library has addressed some of them, but the staff is still worried. Clerks and librarians become deeply discouraged when they receive very little security support. Customers are not going to come to a community library if they do not feel safe.

All of these problems have lead to a problem of **low morale**. Staff is stressed out, overworked, underpaid and vulnerable. If the library wants to have a motivated, productive workforce, then it needs to make substantial efforts to address these issues. The local has called for a labor-management meeting to address the serious security issues at a number of libraries. Soon, the local and library will meet on the dress code. We have filed a number of out-of-title grievances. However, these are minor reactions to major endemic problems. Management should be more proactive in increasing salaries, staffing levels and security, and that will improve staff morale.

The staff wants to enjoy coming to work. They believe in the mission of the public library. They appreciate their customers' needs and want to help them. Management should make the staff's work experience worthwhile. They should recognize our hard work and work with the union to improve compensation, increase staffing and secure our libraries.

To ensure management lives up to its obligations, we, the local and its members, must be vigilant. We will use all the tools at our disposal: an active membership, labor-management meetings, grievances, publicity and outreach, bargaining and more. The new president, strong Executive Board and active membership will work together to improve the 3 S's, an M and maybe (but hopefully not) a few other letters.

In solidarity,
John Hyslop
Acting President

Dress Code Survey Results

The results to Local 1321's survey of the Library's dress code are in and tallied. Following are the numbers, analysis of the results and conclusions.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results and comments from the survey, the members want:

- To be treated like professionals
- Casual dress to be extended Friday to Sunday and the summer months
- To be able to wear neat denim, sneakers, Capri pants, fleece
- No uniforms
- Redesigned ID
- Not to be told what to wear

RESULTS

Of the 132 of you who responded to the survey, an overwhelming majority (71%) disapprove of the library's current dress code. Comments related to this were that people would like to wear denim, Capri pants, fleece and men not to have to wear ties. Other comments were "treat us like professionals," "do not tell us what to wear," and "it is inflexible and patronizing." A few people commented that NYPL and BPL do not have dress codes and they somehow manage.

An overwhelming majority (79%) of the respondents believe that everyone should be required to follow the same dress code, unless employees' jobs involve special physical demands. A few respondents commented that enforcement is uneven. A majority of the respondents want to modify Casual Friday; 40% would like to see it extended through to Sunday and the next largest percentage (22%) would like it extended through the summer months. Only 17% of the respondents are satisfied with the current policy.

A large majority of the respondents do not want a uniform; 61% "Strongly Disapprove" of any uniform and a total of 70% "Somewhat Disapprove" and "Strongly Disapprove" of any uniform. To assist customers in recognizing library employees, the majority (77%) want improved ID badges. The respondents were overwhelmingly in favor of wearing denim of any color and clean, neat sneakers. In fact 88% of the respondents said they want to wear denim and 61% believe wearing sneakers if clean is appropriate. One children's librarian commented that denim is perfect clothing for the finger painting programs they do.

NUMBERS

Total respondents 132

How do you feel about the current dress code?

129 responses

Strongly Approve 7 (5%)

Somewhat Approve 42 (33%)

Somewhat Disapprove 57 (44%)

Strongly Disapprove 34 (26%)

38% Approve, 71% Disapprove

Do you feel that any dress policy should apply equally to all non-uniformed QBPL employees except those whose jobs involve special physical demands?

127 responses

Strongly agree 58 (46%)

Somewhat agree 42 (33%)

Somewhat disagree 21 (21%)

Strongly disagree 6 (5%)

79% Agree, 21% Disagree

If you answered "Strongly Disagree" or "Somewhat Disagree" to the above, what would you consider an equitable way to apply different levels of dress to staff?

43 responses

By title or Occupational Group 15 (35%)

Public Service vs. non-Public Service Staff 28 (65%)

How do you feel about the Casual Friday policy?

129 responses

Should remain as is 22 (17%)

Should be switched to Saturday 12 (9%)

Should be extended through Sunday 53 (40%)

Should be eliminated or extended to the entire week 25 (19%)

Should be extended for the summer months 28 (22%)

Would you approve of wearing any form of uniform, if provided by the library free of charge?

132 responses

Strongly Approve 9 (7%)

Somewhat Approve 30 (23%)

Somewhat Disapprove 12 (9%)

Strongly Disapprove 80 (61%)

30% Approve, 70% Disapprove

If you answered "Strongly Approve" or "Somewhat Approve" what form do you think a library-supplied uniform might take?

41 Responses

Library tie or scarf 4 (10%)

Library jacket 10 (24%)

Library Polo Shirt 16 (39%)

Library Vest or Waistcoat 10 (24%)

If you answered "Strongly Disapprove" or "Somewhat Disapprove" to the above what would you consider a reasonable way to make Queens Library staff recognizable to customers?

100 Responses

Improved ID badge 77 (77%)

Library Supplied Lanyard 23 (23%)

If worn neatly, is any color of denim appropriate?

128 Responses

Strongly Approve 81 (63%)

Somewhat Approve 32 (25%)

Somewhat Disapprove 5 (4%)

Strongly Disapprove 10 (9%)

88% Approve, 12% Disapprove

If not worn-out, are sneakers appropriate?

131 responses

Strongly Approve 46 (35%)

Somewhat Approve 35 (27%)

Somewhat Disapprove 21 (16%)

Strongly Disapprove 19 (15%)

61% Approve, 27% Disapprove

Presidential Election Results 2006

To complete the 2004-2007 term of president made vacant by John Socha's retirement, the local had an election. The local hired the American Arbitration Association to conduct it. On June 7, 2006, the votes were counted. The following are the results.

Ballots mailed	793
Ballots received	421
Mahendra Indarjit	109
Conrad Stogel	60
Margalit Susser	147
Deborah Wynn	104
Blanks/Voids	1

The AFSCME constitution states a candidate must receive

51% of the votes to be declared the winner. No one candidate received that number. Therefore a runoff will be conducted between the candidates with the two highest numbers of votes – Mahendra Indarjit and Margalit Susser.

The runoff will be conducted immediately. Ballots were mailed on Friday June 9; they will be due on July 6; and counted on July 7.

If someone does not receive a ballot, please call the American Arbitration Association at (800) 529-5218 or contact someone from the Election Committee:

Steven Nobel, Middle Village

William Zukowsky, Fresh Meadows

Jane Smith, Chair, Kew Gardens Hills

Citywide Bargaining *(continued from page 2)*

what to make of the negotiations. I believe the union conceded a lot and the city did not budge on much. We shall see what happens next. The city must offer more for our members to agree to a contract, especially because we gave so much the last contract and the cost of everything is going up.

On June 5, 2006, the city and union held another bargaining session at which the city proposed changes to our pension. (Pension issues are controlled by state legislation, but if the city and DC 37 work together we can influence our legislatures.) The city did not discuss any other issue.

After receiving an explanation from the city about their proposal, the union caucused. We discussed the merits and demerits of the city's proposal. We agreed that we could have discussions about a number of their demands, but the majority of them were not negotiable. We also agreed that this should be

referred to the joint city and union sub-committee.

We met with the city again and explained our position. They agreed to refer the negotiations to the sub-committee. The union stated its displeasure at the pace of the negotiations and wants to see more progress. The city agreed to meet again as soon as possible.

After my second round of bargaining I am beginning to understand the process. A subtle and not so subtle gamesmanship is definitely a part of any bargaining, including posturing on both sides. I do believe progress is being made, but at a very slow pace.

The members must be informed about the bargaining process. Look for updates and progress reports in DC 37's Public Employee Press, in this newsletter and on our website from me or the next president.

—J.H.