

# Gear up for negotiations!

The current AFSCME Local 66 contracts for Basic and Merit unit employees are set to expire at the end of this calendar year. Bargaining for a new contract will begin in late summer or early fall, but the process to prepare for a successful round of negotiations starts now.

Our first step is the election of a new negotiating team.

The team is comprised of 10 members: two Basic-North, two Merit-North, three Basic-South, and three Merit-South. Members serve from May 1 of the year they were elected until April 30 of the year the contract expires.

To be elected to the negotiating team, you must be a Union member in good standing.

“Serving on the negotiations team is a challenging but rewarding experience,” said Matt Farden, who has served as a member of the negotiating team for five contract cycles.

Negotiating team members meet with County representation at the bargaining table, but they also lead the effort to craft sound proposals leading up to negotiations.

“Negotiations can be time-consuming, from researching and familiarizing yourself with proposals, to talking with members about issues,” Farden said. “The team meets

**Jump to CONTRACT, Page 2**



**SUBMITTED PHOTO**

Members of the negotiating team gather outside the Government Services Center in Duluth during the last contract cycle.

## Membership is on the rise

For years, union members across Minnesota have advocated for a law obligating public employers to allow unions in-person access to new employees. In 2024, that law was passed ([Minn. Stat. 179A.07, subd. 9](#)).

Public employers must now allow bargaining unit representatives to meet with new hires, in person, within 30 days of their employment. No less than 30 minutes must be allowed for this orientation meeting.

Members of the AFSCME Local 66 Basic and Merit units have developed a new worker orientation program that introduces prospective members to the basic principals of collective bargaining and the benefits provided to St. Louis County employees from decades of collective bargaining.

After just a few months, the meetings have already had an impact.

**Jump to MEMBERS, Page 2**

## Q&A Corner

**Q: What happens to an employee's sick leave when they resign? Does it go back to the County or does it go into a bank where it can be used by other employees?**

A: When an employee resigns and stops working for the County, accrued sick time simply disappears. Funding for sick leave is allocated only after the leave is utilized, so there is no pool of money waiting to be used. When an employee resigns, it is as though the accrued sick leave never existed.

*Do you have a question you would like answered? Send it to the BMOC members at [afscmebmoc@gmail.com](mailto:afscmebmoc@gmail.com).*

## CONTRACT, from Page 1

regularly to discuss plans for negotiations and plans moving forward.”

After a contract has been ratified, the negotiating team's work is not finished. Members work with County management to address contract issues that arise, with the exception of grievances, which are handled by Union stewards or staff members.

If you are interested in serving as a negotiating team member for the upcoming contract cycle, or if you would like to nominate a co-worker, please complete a nomination form (<https://forms.gle/higbH5KwRaZHuhcu9>), or send an email to [afscmebmoc@gmail.com](mailto:afscmebmoc@gmail.com).

The nominations period will close March 19. Elections for the negotiating team will be held April 16, with a virtual voting option available the day before (April 15).

A complete list of voting locations and times will be available following the close of nominations, along with instructions for voting virtually..

After the negotiating team has been elected, a call for proposals will be put out, and Union members will have numerous opportunities to bring issues to the attention of the negotiating team.

## MEMBERS, from Page 1

“We are seeing increased membership numbers,” said Eric Jacobson, AFSCME Local 66 field representative.

Since the law changed and the Union began holding new employee orientation meetings, Jacobson said, Union interest has been on the rise.

“We have seen the vast majority of workers we have interacted with sign their union card,” he said.

Dedicated Union members welcome new employees monthly in Duluth, Hibbing and Virginia. They provide information on AFSCME resources within the bargaining unit, how to become a Union member, how to connect with stewards, and opportunities to volunteer.

New employees **must** be released from their work duties by their managers or supervisors for 30 minutes to meet with AFSCME members. Meetings are held the first Tuesday of the month in Duluth at the Government Services Center, the first Wednesday in Virginia, and the first Thursday in Hibbing.

If you have questions about the new employee meetings or would like to be come involved, please contact the BMOC team at [afscmebmoc@gmail.com](mailto:afscmebmoc@gmail.com).

## AFSCME Local 66 Event Calendar

Call for Negotiating Team nominations . . . . .	<b>March 5, 2025</b>
Close of nominations . . . . .	<b>March 19, 2025</b>
Negotiating team elections (virtual) . . . . .	<b>April 15, 2025</b>
Negotiating team elections (in-person) . . . . .	<b>April 16, 2025</b>
Negotiating team run-off election (if needed) . . . . .	<b>May 7, 2025</b>
Call for proposals . . . . .	<b>TBD</b>
Proposal ranking meeting . . . . .	<b>TBD</b>