

ISSUE

03

NOVEMBER
2024

QUARTERLY
NEWSLETTER

Local 221

MnDOT Central Office | Metro District

General Membership Meetings

Union Members are welcome to attend the monthly General Membership meetings.

Dinner starts at 5:30 pm
Meeting starts at 6:00 pm

HILTON DOUBLETREE HOTEL

2540 Cleveland Avenue
Roseville, MN 55113

UPCOMING MEETING DATES

Fourth Thursday of the Month

- ▶ Thursday, Nov 21, 2024
(week early due to Thanksgiving)
- ▶ No December Meeting
- ▶ Thursday, Jan 23, 2025

Facebook

[Afsme Local 221 - MnDOT Metro 1](#)

[Facebook](#)

Local 221 Website

<https://www.afscmemn.org/local-221->

[mndot-central-office-metro](https://www.afscmemn.org/mndot-central-office-metro/)

AFSCME Council 5 Website

<https://www.afscmemn.org/>



this issue

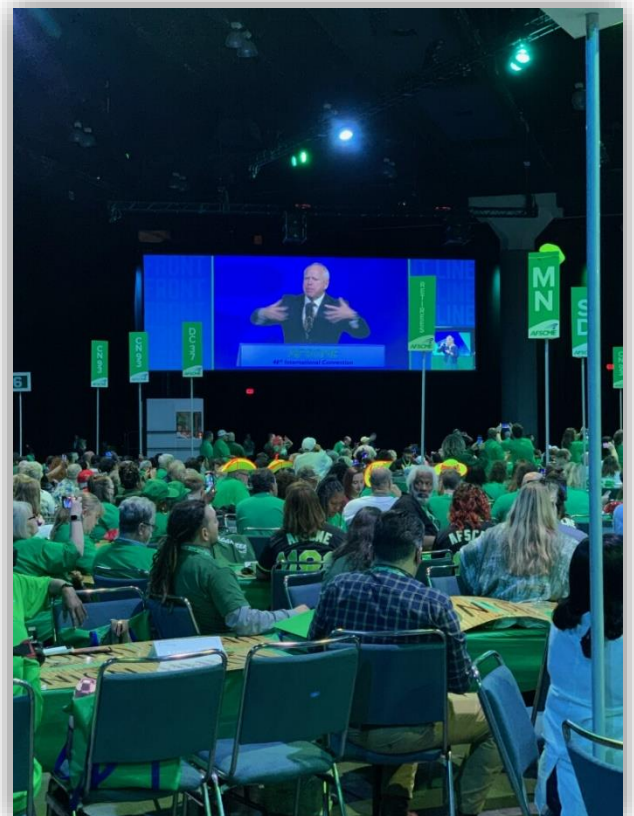
- AFSCME International Convention **P.1**
- Mechanics & Welders Workshop **P.3**
- AFSCME Council 5 Convention **P.4**
- Policy Committees: SEPC & HEPC **P.6**

AFSCME International Convention

The 2024 AFSCME International Convention was held in August at the Los Angeles Convention Center. Delegates from across the country, including several from Local 221, attended this bi-annual event.

Local 221 Delegates were asked to submit their impressions of the event; and also what they thought the convention accomplished, and what our Local accomplished by attending.

The International Convention in Los Angeles this year was another amazing coming together of other like-minded hard-working middle class AFSCME UNION members. Most are leaders back in their home state and come to these conventions to get re-energized for the next 2 years and prepare for the work that must be done if we want to survive as a union. There was alot of networking, meetings, training, appeals and general business of the union.





Lee Saunders - AFSCME Int'l President
Bryan Kirsch - Treasurer 221 **Darren Trast** - President 221

Attending these conventions is crucial in moving forward as we meet other members who have the same issues we have. It may be Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico, Massachusetts, California, New York and many more where we all gather to be one big labor force moving forward to sustain, protect and improve workplace safety, hours, OT and general working conditions

I encourage every member to get involved with AFSCME Local 221, Your union.

Darren Trast, President Local 221



Bryan Kirsch - Treasurer 221 **Jean Zimmerman** - VP2 221
Rebecca Haflund - E-board 221 **Mike Novlan** - E-board 221
Louis McNutt - E-board 221 / C5 Secretary

As a Sargent-at-Arms for the AFSCME International Convention in Los Angeles I had a different experience than the other delegates. I got to go behind the scenes and see what it takes for 4000 delegates to come together and make it secure and fluid as possible, including working with secret service for Gov. Walz's visit.

I connected with staff and union members from across the US and Puerto Rico.

Local 221 was noticed by everyone, we had our hi-vis pink and yellow shirts as well as our outback hats.

Going to the Rally for CA Local 3299 and seeing the 'green wave' show up in support was amazing, seeing the care and passion to fight for our AFSCME brothers and sisters.

Rebecca Haflund, Executive Board, Local 221

Local 221 Leadership

Line Officers

PRESIDENT

Afscmeprs1221@gmail.com
 Darren Trast TG Maryland Days
 VP HEPC

VICE PRESIDENT 1

Afscmevp11221@gmail.com
 Drew Sykes TG Maryland Nights

VICE PRESIDENT 2

Afscmevp21221@gmail.com
 Jean Zimmerman TGS Waters Edge
 Traffic Engineering / Sign Design

TREASURER

AfscmeTrsL221@gmail.com
 Bryan Kirsch TG Eden Prairie Days

SECRETARY

Afscmesec1221@gmail.com
 Wade Erstad TGS Eden Prairie Nights
 TSS Review Committee Member

Executive Board

Joe Sockel TG Forest Lake
 Scott Zellmer TG Oakdale Days
 J. Hinrichs TGS TAPP Arden Hills
 Louis McNutt HEM Maple Grove Days
 Mike Novlan TGS Spring Lake Park
 Rebecca Haflund TG Camden Nights

Trustees

Kelly Chirpich TG Golden Valley
 Leslie Vaughn TG GV Sign Shop
 Chief Steward Member Outreach
 Crystal Gaebler TG Cedar Nights

Annual Mechanics & Welders Workshop



Attendees at the St. Cloud Mechanics and Welders Workshop came from all around the State for this annual two-session event. The workshop is where they can connect, and together they learn about new trends, tools, products, and procedures.

Metro Local 221 hosts a meet and greet event every year for our MnDOT heavy equipment mechanics and welders.

Our Local learned long ago that many of our out-state brothers and sisters stationed at rural shops must travel great distances to attend monthly member meetings at their Locals.

So in light of this unique hardship, Local 221 provides our mechanics and welders a forum during their time in St. Cloud where they can voice and discuss their union questions and concerns, and also socialize and have fun.

This year, Vice President Drew Sykes, and Trustee Leslie Vaughn were the hosts at this two-night event. The mechanics and welders who attended were appreciative of the opportunity to discuss their questions about the contract going forward.



Leslie Vaughn - Trustee 221



Drew Sykes - Vice President 1 221

AFSCME Council 5 Annual Convention



The annual AFSCME Council 5 Convention was held in Minneapolis this past September. Delegates from all of the Council 5 Locals were in attendance to vote for bi-annual seats in Leadership, Officers, and Executive Board. The assembly re-elected Eric Hesse as President.

Of significant note, our own Local 221 member, and past president of 221, **Louis McNutt**, a heavy equipment mechanic at the Maple Grove shop, was re-elected as Secretary on the Council 5 Executive Board. Congratulations, Louis! He will remain a strong voice for MnDOT at Council 5.

Delegates attended workshop sessions on subjects covering topics such as labor law, leadership, contract negotiations, and ways to grow stronger Locals.





Local 221 Delegates in our well known Hi-Viz shirts

The annual convention venue alternates between Duluth and Minneapolis to better accommodate travel convenience among the C5 Locals.

The convention was held at the Marriott Delta Hotel in Minneapolis. This venue is a union hotel, and while the facility is great for some events, it was actually too small to accommodate this year's convention activities and delegates. Arrangements have already been made to hold the 2026 Minneapolis convention at the unionized DoubleTree Hotel in Bloomington, which is better suited for larger events.

On the national level, Council 5 in Minnesota is recognized as a vibrant and leading AFSCME Chapter. We were once again honored by the President of AFSCME International, Lee Saunders, as the keynote speaker at our convention this year.



Lee Saunders - AFSCME Int'l President



Lee Saunders - AFSCME Int'l President **Eric Hesse** – Council 5 President **Bart Anderson** – Council 5 Executive Director

Stewards

Chief Steward Central Region

PRS Darren Trast Maryland

Chief Stewards

VP2 Jean Zimmerman Waters Edge

TRS Bryan Kirsch Eden Prairie

SEC Wade Erstad Eden Prairie

Louis McNutt Maple Grove

Joe Sockel Forest Lake

Scott Zellmer Oakdale

Stewards

VP1 Drew Sykes Maryland

J. Hinrichs Arden Hills

Chad Curtis Camden Nights

Terry Kapfer Forest Lake

Kevin Rosassen Maplewood

Informational Stewards

Mike Novlan Spring Lake Park

J. Hinrichs Arden Hills

Kelly Chirpich Golden Valley

Leslie Vaughn Golden Valley

Ken Kogler Oakdale

Dan Trog Oakdale

Rebecca Haflund Camden

Crystal Gaebler Cedar

Joe Anderson North Branch

Brian Johnson Roseville

Email general or grievance

questions to:

AfscmeLocal221Steward@gmail.com

the UNION difference

Corporate-funded organizations are trying to get AFSCME members to give up their membership and lose their voice on the job. Declare: I'm Sticking With My Union!

By giving up your Union membership, they know you lose member-only benefits such as:

- A powerful, unified voice in your workplace.
- Ability to vote on your contract.
- Ability to participate and vote for your local Union leadership.
- Collective power to get the strongest wage increases and benefits as possible.
- Solidarity and "people power" in the halls of power to fight for working people.

Corporate-funded organizations like the Freedom Foundation want you to give up your rights in the workplace, so corporations and our employers can take advantage of us as workers. The Freedom Foundation, and its allies, work across the country to reverse policies and laws that benefit working people and directly benefit employers' being able to take advantage of workers.

With your Union membership, you are protected by a collective bargaining agreement with due process rights, the right to representation, and a work family that has your back!

Our Union Membership Proves

The Union Difference !

Drew Sykes
Vice-President 1, Local 221
New Employee Orientation

TG, Maryland Truck Station



Drilling Down Into the Role of the Mysterious Policy Committee

What Is It? and What Does It Do?

Every two years our Union and the State of Minnesota engage in contract negotiations with the aim of, broadly speaking, balancing the needs of the state employees with those of the state and its agencies.

The negotiation process between Labor and Management brings forth from both sides their emerging concerns; and also clarifies existing practices, procedures, and policies. The end-product is a mutually agreed upon contract that governs our working relationship for the next two years. Our current contract is set to expire on June 30 of 2025. The Union is now gearing up for negotiations to begin in January of 2025.

Perhaps you are new to MnDOT and aren't very familiar with the whole contract negotiation thing. Or perhaps you've been with MnDOT for several years now, but you may still not know all that much about the process. This article will shed some light on the nuts and bolts, overall structure, of the negotiation process. Or to put the question another way, **how do the needs of the employees make their way into the final ratified contract?**

Let's start with the big picture: almost every State agency is comprised of employees who are AFSCME Union members. Some of those agencies include Agriculture, Commerce, Corrections, Health, Human Services, Natural Resources, Revenue, Public Safety, Transportation, Pollution Control, and Information Technology. The contract between AFSCME and the State applies to ALL workers in ALL of these different departments. There is the person taking groundwater samples, the person processing tax forms, the person inspecting farm operations, the person conducting a resident wellness check, the person calibrating fuel pumps, the person re-setting your login password, and the person plowing snow on the highway.

And because there are so many different agencies, each with their own specialized needs, the contract also includes dozens of Supplemental Agreements, each of which is specific to each individual department or agency. In fact, the next time you pick up a copy of the contract book you will see that the first one-third of the written contract applies to all agencies, while the remaining two-thirds of the contract contain the supplemental agreements.

Hopefully by now you are starting to realize that the folks in MnDOT are not the only employees affected by the negotiation process, otherwise known as collective bargaining.

Let's zoom in a little closer: National Unions in general structurally manage the needs of their members by compartmentalizing everyone into what are called **Councils**. AFSCME has members all across the United States. The members of AFSCME are by definition public employees at the state, county, and municipal levels of government. Each State contains AFSCME Councils which cover a large geographic region of a respective State.

Here in Minnesota we have two Councils. Council 5 covers all state agencies, and Council 65 covers city and county agencies. The Council is basically an agent of **AFSCME International in Washington DC**, and the Council implements Union activity and oversight within their region.

Councils similarly manage the needs of their members by compartmentalizing everyone into what are called **Locals**. A Local is also made up of Union members from a geographic area, hence the name "Local" to signify a small region within the Council's area of coverage; and in our situation here in Minnesota, a Local may include members from several agencies within that geographic area. So, for example, our Local is named Local 221, and Local 221 covers the Metro DOT area and is part of Council 5.

AFSCME further divides agency employees into **Bargaining Units** to better reflect the nature of the work being conducted. For example, Unit 2 covers members whose work involves craft, maintenance, and labor TA and TG job classifications. MnDOT maintenance employees are part of Unit 2. Unit 4 covers health care workers; Unit 6 covers clerical and office workers; and Unit 7 covers technical workers of TGS and TS job classifications, Bridge, Construction, and crew leads. Local 221 indeed represents all of the bargaining units, but when you attend a Union meeting you will see that Local 221 is heavily represented by Unit 2 MnDOT employees in the Metro area. This is not unusual; Union members within any of the agencies represented by AFSCME form their own Locals which are often heavily represented by one of the bargaining units.

You can begin to see the respective structures of the State agencies and of the Union, and how they relate to each other. But with dozens of agencies operating all over the State, and all of these Locals dotted everywhere, how does it all come together for contract negotiations?



From the Union's perspective, there needs to be a way to funnel each Local to a seat at the bargaining table.

With 43,000 represented state employees and more than 150 Locals, it is obviously not feasible to physically bring everyone together. Instead, the Council authorizes the Locals to create a **Committee** to represent all of its Locals statewide, which then acts as a bridge or a liaison between the Council and all of its Locals. This statewide committee is called the **State Employee Policy Committee, or SEPC**. Their role is to coordinate the activities of the Local unions representing employees in the bargaining units and to advise and assist the Council on matters affecting the interests of their members. All Local unions must be involved in SEPC. The officers, executive board, and delegates of SEPC are the ones who bring forth, discuss, and vote on policy matters concerning Union members.

SEPC in turn has authority to create its own versions of a policy committee. The committees under SEPC break out into more specialized employment areas to better focus on the needs of employees within specific state agencies. So, for example, there is a statewide committee specific to the employees in MnDOT. This is the **Highway Employee Policy Committee, or HEPC**.

HEPC considers matters affecting MnDOT members. These issues may include but are not limited to areas such as the establishment and recommendation of bargaining goals; the establishment and recommendation of standard contract provisions; the exchange of information regarding the settlement of grievances; mutual assistance in organizing, servicing and bargaining; and, where appropriate, joint bargaining with the employer, including wages and healthcare benefits.

So, how do the needs of the employees make their way into the final ratified contract? By connecting the Union members at the Local level to the Council by way of the Policy Committee.

The work of the policy committees, both SEPC and HEPC, streamlines the proposals, ideas, and concerns coming from the Locals into manageable action items to be addressed at the Council level, including the items that make their way to the contract negotiation teams when they engage in labor/management discussions.

These Union structures, from International to Council to Locals to Policy Committees to Negotiation Teams, work together to accomplish the collective goals of the Union members across the State. Their combined efforts resolve into the ratified contract we receive every two years.

If you would like to become a part of the contract negotiations process, start by attending your monthly Local general membership meetings. There are opportunities to run for Local offices and executive board, to volunteer as a delegate at Council events, to participate on a policy committee, and to be a part of a future negotiation team.

Remember, without the Union we are all reduced to At-Will employment status where the State can fire you at any time and for any reason, with NO mechanism available for you, beyond litigation at your own expense, to fight for your job or your legal rights as an employee.

Support your Union and get involved. Only by standing together do we have leverage and a voice to influence our wages, benefits, working conditions, and our quality of life.

This Month's Q&A Contract Tips

Q : Having an Attorney Negotiate Contract Terms on Our Behalf

A : Article 2 lays out the recognized bargaining relationship between the Employer and the Union.

Section 1 clearly states that “[t]he Employer recognizes the Union as the exclusive bargaining representative of all the employees included in the bargaining units.” Those bargaining units are enumerated in Appendix A and include Unit 2 (craft, maintenance, and labor), Unit 3 (service), Unit 4 (health care non-professional), Unit 6 (clerical and office), and Unit 7 (technical).

And Section 3 further clarifies that “[t]he Employer will not meet and confer, or meet and negotiate, with any individual employees or with any other employee organization with respect to the terms and conditions of employment of the employees covered by [the contract] except through the Union or its authorized representatives.”

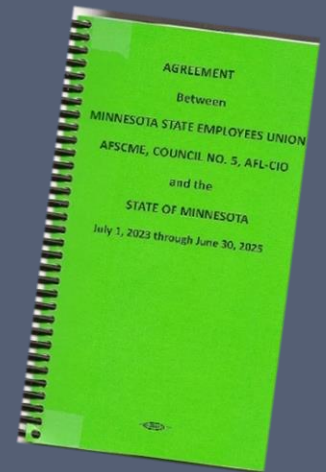
It is understood that the authorized representatives of the Union, for the purpose of contract negotiations, are the duly elected members of the Negotiating Teams, selected exclusively from among the Unionized employees.

Even if a hired labor law attorney were to be appointed as a Union authorized representative to directly negotiate contract terms on our behalf, doing so would violate the exclusivity clause of Section 1.

Furthermore, even if it were allowed, an outside attorney would require a great deal of time to become familiar not only with the current terms of the contract, but also to comprehend and absorb the aspects of the many and varied job description classes contained in each of the bargaining units. More time would then be needed to inventory the current employment issues and concerns as they relate collectively, and uniquely, to our array of state agencies employees. Hiring an attorney as either a negotiator or an advisor is a very expensive endeavor.

The matter comes down to the cost of such outside legal representation, which, when you include the time involved in the negotiations themselves, would be prohibitive.

The members of our negotiating teams are themselves employees from all the state agencies; and are much better suited to understand their job requirements and employment concerns because they know first-hand their situations and needs.



Contract Negotiations Corner

The next round of negotiations for the 2025 – 2027 Contract will start with a Union-only delegate assembly in January or February.

A big part of negotiations is called “**Inequities**”. This comes late in the process but allows members to speak to Their Wage vs that of other/same/similar City, County , and other-State Wages.

You can help us collect wage inequity information by filling out the Inequities Form and returning it to the Local. **Deadline is the end of December 2024.**

Please sign up for Memberlink on the www.afscmemn.org website and stay up to date on the negotiation progress.

Upcoming Events

Locals Annual Group Picnic

Saturday, May 3, 2025

