

## Plan threatens members' benefits

### Groton-Dunstable school board moves to outsource cafeteria

The Groton-Dunstable Regional School Committee is looking to cut costs by slashing the benefits of the cafeteria workers through outsourcing. Local 888 members are not giving up without a fight.

About 25 members and their supporters filled the audience at the March 27 School Committee meeting wearing Local 888 T-shirts. Members gave the committee a piece of their mind — and tempers flared.

The committee aims to save a pittance at best — perhaps \$70,000 in the first year, \$90,000 in the third year of the contract — by eliminating health care benefits for most of the workers.

School Committee member Marlena Gilbert sent an email saying she was "concerned about the stress of the unknown for the café staff."

"If the School Committee is really concerned about our well-being, then why are they outsourcing our jobs?" said cafeteria worker **Dorynda Auth**.

The current Local 888 contract runs out June 30. The School Committee is considering



**FOOD FIGHT:** Local 888's **Steve James, Angela Gagne, Dorynda Auth**, attorney **John Magner, Karen Nardone, Leslie Colt**, and organizer **Neal O'Brien**, front, protest the Groton-Dunstable Regional School Committee's outsourcing recipe.

outsourcing the cafeteria operation to Whitsons Culinary Group.

However, Whitsons is the same vendor that the Boston Public Schools got rid of less than two years ago after complaints from parents and health advocates about poor quality and bad-tasting food. Whitsons has run into similar problems in Brookline. "It's the worst food," said

*See page 4 for more on Groton-Dunstable*

## SEIU fest to feature fun, opportunities, U.S. rep



**PRESSLEY**

SEIU unity, good food and fun are at the top of the agenda for the "Spring Fling" set for April 27. Also: Music and dancing.

"It's a great way for our members from around the state to have a chance to meet each other, socialize and have some fun," said **Brenda Rodrigues**, president of Local 888.

A special guest speaker will be new U.S. Rep. **Ayanna Pressley**. The former Boston City

Council member has hit the ground running, emboldening Democrats around the country.

The event will put a spotlight on SEIU caucuses — which are a way for union members with similar backgrounds and interests to get together, build lasting bonds and address issues affecting their communities. They include the African American (AFRAM), Latino, Lavender, Asian/Pacific and Women's



*See page 4 for more on Spring Fling*

## Rejuvenated Billerica set for bargaining

Local 888 members have stepped up to fill the void after the longtime Billerica chapter chair, **Donna Hansen**, announced at a recent union meeting that she was stepping down. The administrative and professional unit's contract runs out June 30.

"My goal is to fight for the 30 other people in our union," said the new chapter leader, building inspector **David Lenzie**. "And it's great to see a couple younger people get involved – members who can continue our union tradition on into the future."

Since taking on Lenzie's former chapter post of secretary, **Joe D'Angelo** has already taken part in stewards' training sponsored by Local 888. The rejuvenated chapter has a complete slate of officers, with **Ken Buffum** as vice president,



**PUMPED UP:** Local 888's professional and administrative unit has some new leaders eager to sit down with Billerica's management.

**Steve Robertson** as treasurer and **Mike Haines** as steward (a post that had been vacant for some time).

The chapter's leaders and the town administrator have since met to set ground rules for bargaining, with the first official session set for May. One thing that could influence the negotiations: The town just did a study of workers' salary and

benefits by job classification to see how they compare to those in similar positions in other towns. Lenzie said he wants to help those in positions that are underpaid while still taking care of the membership as a whole.

*How should your chapter's leadership roles be structured? Email [myunion@SEIU888.org](mailto:myunion@SEIU888.org) or contact your staff organizer for some guidelines.*

## Medicare-for-All movement grows

More and more unions are following the lead of the SEIU and Local 888 — and endorsing proposals for a Medicare-for-All model for the U.S. Meanwhile more than 100 House Democrats are supporting just such a plan, which would make health care a basic human right in this country.

"Today in America, 30 million people are uninsured; 40 million are underinsured. We have the most expensive healthcare system in the world and yet our outcomes are the worst of all industrialized countries," said the chief sponsor of the Medicare for All Act of 2019, U.S. Rep. Pramila Jayapal of Washington state. U.S. House members from Massachusetts who have endorsed the bill include Katherine Clark, William Keating, Joseph P. Kennedy, James McGovern, Ayanna Pressley and Lori Trahan.

At its 2017 convention, the Massachusetts AFL-CIO backed the Resolution in Support of Health

Care as a Human Right. Delegates voted to support federal and state bills "that embody the principles of a single-payer Medicare-for-All system."



Similarly, the national AFL-CIO passed a resolution in 2017 endorsing Medicare for All model. One goal would be to cut overall costs by eliminating the red tape and inefficiency of private health insurance.

For more information on the Medicare for All Act of 2019, see <https://jayapal.house.gov/medicare-for-all/medicare-for-all-act-of-2019/>?

Three Massachusetts members of Congress haven't endorsed the act. You can reach them by going to their websites' contact section: **Stephen Lynch** at <https://lynch.house.gov/contact-me/email-me>, **Seth Moulton** at <https://moulton.house.gov/contact/>, **Richard Neal** at <https://neal.house.gov/contact>.



**TALKING SHOP:** The Local 888 chapter council at the Chelsea Soldiers Home meets. From left: steward **Chrissy Wilson**, steward **Lyneth Martin**, organizer Penelope Jennewein, steward **John McDonough**, and chapter president **Speandilove Nelson**.

## Homes' leaders speak up

SEIU Local 888 leaders continued to press their campaign to improve working conditions at the Holyoke and Chelsea Soldiers Homes during a second meeting with a top state official.

And they called the meeting with Marylou Sudders, the state's secretary of health and human services, a success.

"I can tell you that Sudders is listening – especially with **Brenda** (Local 888 President **Rodrigues**) there, they're all listening," said **Kwesi Ablordeppey**, a CNA and the Holyoke Home's Local 888 chapter chair. "We're making progress."

Sudders had the superintendents from both Soldiers Homes attend the March meeting. Also there: Francisco Urena, state secretary of the Department of Veterans' Services.

"Sudders has a problem-solving attitude," said Joe Montagna, Local 888 internal organizer. "And it's been great for members to talk together, share their experiences and, collectively, bring their issues forward."

Rodrigues said, "It was phenomenal to see Secretary Sudders listen to our members and say to the Soldiers Homes' management: 'You'll take care of this at the local level, right?'"

Union members blame Holyoke Home management for causing high turnover through understaffing, excessive forced overtime and a hostile work environment generating a pileup of grievances.

Sudders said that the state now has a contractor to perform separate staffing studies for each Soldiers Home.

The Holyoke Home, which of course operates around the clock, has hired more staff. But, Ablordeppey said, there are still vacancies for 19 CNA positions and 8 LPNs there.

The meeting with state officials is part of a campaign by Holyoke Local 888 members to seek improvements. They have organized T-shirt protests and delivered a petition to management saying they had no confidence in either the director or assistant director of nursing.

## Officer nabs doggone pup

Watertown's animal control officer, a member of her Local 888 bargaining committee, has



**WAYWARD POOCH:** Vanished after his owner was hurt in car crash.

received accolades for going above and beyond the call of duty to rescue a lost Chihuahua – and getting bitten in the process.

The out-of-state owner of the Chihuahua had to be taken to the hospital after a Watertown car crash. When the snarly hound tried to bite one of the first responders on the scene, everyone backed away and the dog ran off.

Animal Control Officer

**Karen O'Reilly** said she had put the word out, but there were no sightings for a couple days. While out on another call, she found the dog, named Chico, in a swampy area along the Charles River, maybe half a mile from her truck.

Watertown Police Capt. Raymond Dupuis and another officer arrived on the scene to help out. He said that, "after being out in the cold for two nights, the dog had an extremely bad attitude."

Nonetheless, O'Reilly was intent on capturing the snarling creature right then and there. "I knew he wasn't going to be easy to get," said O'Reilly. Indeed she did get bitten.

Despite it all, she even took the animal home. For more on doggone, visit on the web:

<http://tinyurl.com/doggonepup>.

## Local 888 leader joins staff

Veteran Local 888 leader **Josh Clancy** is leaving behind his marathon plowing days to become an internal organizer for the union.

Clancy had served as Local 888 chapter president over five years at the Tyngsborough Department of Public Works. He was the lead negotiator in the last round of contract talks. A key win, he said, was the addition of longevity pay — up to \$3,000 annually for someone on their anniversary date after 20 years of service.



**CLANCY**

When it comes to negotiations, “you have to keep pushing — don’t take no for an answer. At the same time, you still have to find common ground.”

How do you get there?

“Small talk is important. You learn to see eye-to-eye with people like the town

administrator. You pick up a lot of information that you can use later to try get the parties into alignment.”

In addition, Clancy worked to bring the town’s other unionized workers together so as to bargain from a stronger position. “My favorite part of my old job was dealing with management on behalf of my chapter members and working with the other unions.”

Clancy worked for the Tyngsborough DPW as a skilled laborer for 10 years: “I enjoyed it all,” he said, commenting on the range of duties.

Perhaps the DPW’s most prominent role is cleaning the roads of snow and ice — which could mean ridiculously long hours plowing and sanding. “Plowing and sanding during storms, there were times we worked 30-plus hours straight,” he said. Improving break times and pay for this service was an important contract victory.

He comes from a union family, with relatives belonging to various locals — including an aunt who was a chapter president for Local 888.

Clancy and his wife, Lisa, have a daughter, Lydia, 6. In his off hours, Clancy likes to take his daughter out fishing in a canoe. They live in Mason, N.H.

## Groton-Dunstable food fight

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one food-service worker, “I would not feed it to my cat.”

The company has been mired in other controversies as well. As reported by MassLive.com, the head cook at Longmeadow High School was fired for alleged sexual harassment less than two years ago. The accuser and another worker said that when complaints had been made about the cook previously, those who voiced their grievances had been fired.

For more on Groton-Dunstable, see:

<http://tinyurl.com/whitsons>.

## Mass. SEIU set for ‘Spring Fling’

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caucuses. SEIU caucuses can serve as an entry point into union activities and help members become leaders.

**The statewide SEIU “Spring Fling” is set for Sat., April 27, 4 to 8 p.m., at the SEIU 1199 Union Hall, 108 Myrtle St., Quincy.**

The event is sponsored by the SEIU Massachusetts State Council, SEIU Community Action and Locals 888, 1199, 509 and 32BJ. To RSVP, visit <https://bit.ly/2SbhnwY>

## Coming Attractions



### FAIR SHARE AMENDMENT

**HEARING:** Thurs., April 11, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., SEIU State Council office, 145 Tremont St., Boston.

**MGM SPRINGFIELD FUNDRAISER:** Benefits SEIU Local 888 COPA (Committee on Political Action). Cost: \$40. May 4 event includes breakfast sandwich and charter bus, which leaves at 10 a.m. from the Local 888 headquarters, 25 Braintree Hill Office Park, Braintree. Also: as much as \$20 in MGM casino scrip and a \$10 food credit. For more details, see <http://www.seiu888.org/>

### PROMOTING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:

Wed., May 15, 1 to 2:30 p.m., SEIU State Council office, 145 Tremont St., Boston.

