

Leaders lay out strategic plan

Many contracts in food service, Boston, state due to expire

The Local 888 Executive Board has approved a new strategic plan for 2020 that will build on what the union accomplished this past year. A key part of the plan: Gear up to negotiate 83 contracts.

The strategic plan calls for a continued focus on pay equity for cafeteria workers. Eight Local 888 food service contracts will expire in both 2020 and 2021. One goal for next year is to organize another “Food



Service Workers’ Recognition Week,” a major part of this past year’s successful “Food Is Love” campaign.

That effort was part of Local 888’s commitment to setting contract standards.

City of Boston contracts covering 12 chapters, about 1,800 members, will expire this year. Chapter leaders are ramping up efforts with the goals of recruiting new leaders and winning good contracts.

Also, leaders of Unit 2 will come together to plan for 2020 contract

campaigns covering more than 1,200 members. These chapters for state workers include the Holyoke and Chelsea Soldiers’ Homes, the State Lottery and UMass Lowell .

For a copy of Local 888’s 2020 strategic plan, email rwilson@seiu888.org.



TIME TO PARTY: Local 888 members in Boston’s Department of Neighborhood Development celebrated the season while looking ahead to contract negotiations. The chapter is one of 12 city contracts expiring this year.

Bylaw changes OK’d in mail-in ballot

“It’s gratifying that the proposed bylaw changes were approved by such an overwhelming majority of our members,” said Local 888 President **Brenda Rodrigues**. “Executive board members and staff worked long and hard on drafting these changes, which will help us build a stronger union.”

Local 888 members voted 85 percent to 15 percent to approve revisions to the union’s bylaws. The mail ballot vote concluded on Dec.

20. The ballot count was overseen by the union’s legal department. The goals of the bylaw changes are to increase participation and promote greater democracy in the union and to strengthen members’ rights to a safe and fair work environment. Before the

See page 4 for more on bylaws



RODRIGUES

A year marked by big campaigns

2019 was a milestone year for Local 888 in terms of strengthening the union to help members win better contracts, benefits and working conditions. The union conducted winning contract campaigns, led the fight to improve the standing of cafeteria workers, made legislative gains and extended Local 888 dental and vision plans to more members.

Librarians at Brandeis and Boston universities led very successful contract campaigns with support from students and other campus unions. (See related article page 4.)

Last March, Local 888 members were facing the Groton-Dunstable Regional School Committee's plan to outsource their jobs. With support from Local 888 staff and leaders, the members fought back — waving signs, organizing a rally and harnessing community support. The 20 jobs were saved.



In fact, cafeteria workers are one of the 10 largest occupations in Local 888. To recognize cafeteria workers and highlight their low pay and apparent gender discrimination, the union organized "Food Service Workers' Recognition Week." Members across the state celebrated, putting up "Food is Love" banners and lawn signs, and Gov. Charlie Baker signed a



LONGTIME LOCAL 888 MEMBERS: Francis Thomas 'Tom' Lange and Edward MacDonald were honored for their years of service with the Brockton Housing Authority upon their retirement.



SHOWING SOLIDARITY: Members of the Brandeis Labor Coalition supported the Local 888 librarians.

proclamation. And the local held a public hearing with elected officials in Brockton. (For more information, email lhiggins@seiu888.org.)

At the State House, SEIU Local 888 and other labor unions won a major political victory. A new Massachusetts law aims to limit the effect of the U.S. Supreme Court's Janus decision, which undermined public workers' collective bargaining rights.

This Janus-Fix legislation requires public employers to give chapter leaders time to provide orientation to new hires, during work hours and in the workplace. This is crucial for keeping Local 888 strong, with about one-fifth of the membership turning over every year.

Local 888 continues to push for legislation that would improve many members' pensions and that would allow the MassDefenders to organize for their collective bargaining rights. (For more information, email tmckeever@seiu888.org.)

In addition, SEIU Local 888's affiliated health plans continued to sign up new members. Seven new chapters joined the dental and vision plans: Blue Hills Regional Vocational, Lowell Day Nursery, the Woburn clerical and cafeteria chapters and the towns of Arlington, Norwell and Westwood.

For more information on Local 888's affiliated health funds, contact Linda DeLuca at 617-241-3367 or ldeluca.funds@seiu888.org.

Executive Board votes to bring on 2 new members

The Local 888 Executive Board has voted to appoint two new members, **Shaylin Hogan** from Emerson College and **John Kallmerten** from the State Lottery. Both those chapters are part of the local's 10 largest bargaining units with expiring contracts in 2020.

"Emerson is a great school that delivers fantastic value to students," said Hogan, a leader in the union drive there. "But that value was not trickling down to the staff."

After she met with her fellow staffers who wanted to unionize, she was excited about the cause — and eager to get going. It was a hard-fought struggle.



HOGAN

A key turning point was a 2018 May Day rally at the Emerson administration building. Hogan, graduate studies program coordinator, told the crowd:

"We're only looking for fairness,

job security, a livable wage and a decent contract."

The rally got the college president's attention, and he came down from his office to speak. Soon after, Emerson dropped its demand for "merit" pay and the Local 888 members won their first contract.



KALLMERTEN

The contract covers about 150 clerical, technical and professional employees at Emerson. Hogan says that other

workers with similar jobs deserve the benefits of a union contract, too.

Kallmerten, chapter president at the Lottery, is a 25-year veteran of the state agency. Over the past six years, he has been an active chapter leader.

He said that a "philosophy of life" pushed him to get more involved. "I don't like it when people just sit back and complain — and don't step up and take responsibility," Kallmerten said. "So I stepped up. I wanted to make a difference."

The chapter recently reached an agreement that means the state agency will fully cover the payroll tax that will fund the new Massachusetts Paid Family and Medical Leave Act. "I'm excited that our members are not going to have to pay any additional money for the new law," said Kallmerten.

The state's new Paid Family and Medical Leave Act took effect Oct. 1. SEIU locals in Massachusetts helped pass the new law as part of the Raise Up Coalition.

Under the law, companies with more than 25 workers are charged a payroll tax, and its employees may have to pay a portion of that. With the new agreement, Lottery workers won't have to do that.



SPEAKING UP: At a State House hearing, Local 888 Secretary-Treasurer **Tom McKeever** and state dispatchers **Nicole Annunziata** and **Michael Slater** called for improved pensions for dispatchers.

Dispatchers pension debate

Leaders of the chapter for the Massachusetts 911 dispatchers went to the State House in a bid to get improved pension benefits. They said that the state pension Group 2 language already covers some municipal dispatchers — and should cover state 911 workers as well. *For a full report on the dispatchers and their pensions, see <https://tinyurl.com/911State>.*



SOME THINGS TO CELEBRATE: Boston University Librarians are pictured (from left): **Sean Smith**, **Kara Jackman**, chapter leader **Kate Sifron**, **Naseem Parveem** and chapter leader **Ann Seskin**.

Librarians vote for Local 888

Boston University librarians at the theology school and archivists at the Mugar Memorial Library have voted to join Local 888. They had petitioned the National Labor Relations Board for an election to unite with existing BU bargaining unit members.

The vote could result in 14 new Local 888 members. The NLRB-supervised election comes on the heels of a successful contract campaign this fall by the BU librarians.

“The contract was a momentous achievement,” said **Ann Seskin**, a BU librarian who served on the negotiating team. The new contract paves the way for a fairer, more just workplace.

Up until now, the librarians’ yearly salary raises have been completely based on “merit.” That meant if one member received extra merit pay, it came at the expense of another. After a majority of the members attended a negotiating session, they persuaded BU to provide a 2 percent guaranteed across-the-board increases, with a separate fund for additional merit increases.

BU had also pushed to weaken “just cause” job security protections for discipline or discharge. But after Local 888 members protested at the bargaining table, the university backed down.

In addition to BU staff, Local 888 also unites higher education staff at Brandeis University, Emerson College and UMass Lowell. For more information on uniting higher education workers, call 617-241-3317 or email

iadelman@seiu888.org.



‘Voter Choice’ set for ballot

The Local 888 Executive Board voted to support “ranked choice” voting in state elections. This would mean that voters could weigh in on more than just their first choice. The Massachusetts attorney general recently OK’d putting this initiative on the 2020 ballot.

Last March, Fall River voted

**VOTER CHOICE
MASSACHUSETTS**

overwhelmingly to

toss out the city’s mayor in a recall vote. Then-Mayor Jasiel Correia was facing federal tax evasion and fraud charges.

The will of the people, however, was ignored.

That’s because Correia was still listed on the same ballot as other candidates for mayor. And although he did not come near getting a majority of the vote, in a crowded field of candidates he still topped the ticket — with only 35 percent.

Voter Choice Massachusetts is leading the charge for ranked-choice voting, which likely would have prevented the Fall River election debacle. *For more on ranked choice voting, see <https://tinyurl.com/rankedV>.*

Members OK bylaw changes

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changes were sent to the ballot box, the board approved them unanimously. The changes were based on the need for clarification of existing language and to create more opportunities for member involvement. The overall goal was to establish more democracy in our union.

One change has a “back to the future” look: the creation of a chapter for Local 888 retirees that will have a seat on the executive board.

Coming Attractions

BOSTON CLERKS & TECHS HOLIDAY



PARTY: Thurs., Jan. 16, 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., The Bell in Hand Tavern, Upstairs Function Room, 45 Union St. Boston. Fun socializing with Local 888 members and union stewards. Prizes to be given away.

Please RSVP to **Keturah Trusty** at 617-635-1462, 857-312-1933 (text), or email

Keturah.trusty@boston.gov.