

Custodians make big leap

Winchester chapter's research gives boost to contract talks

A new three-year contract for Winchester custodians will significantly boost pay for Local 888 members — now and into the future.

“Doing our homework, and really being prepared, made all the difference, said **Dan Medwar**, chapter vice president. Medwar said that he and **Seth Parsons**, chapter president, ran for office with an eye toward striving for change. For years, members only received cost-of-living raises.

Medwar and Parsons found out through research that Winchester's school custodians were



MEDWAR

underpaid by as much as \$10,000 a year. “We knew we were on the low end in terms of pay, but it was worse than we thought,” said Medwar.



PARSONS

The old contract had only three steps. The new contract has eight steps; each carries a 2 percent pay hike.

See page 4 for more on Winchester

Hopkinton members' unity stops benefit cuts

Hopkinton cafeterias' management came to the bargaining table seeking to eliminate benefits for most Local 888 members. But members stuck together and refused to go along with the plan. Ultimately, they forced management to back down.

It was a difficult process that took almost a year. At one point, “negotiations were almost at impasse,” said **Pegge Minkle**, chapter president and steward.

Then, Local 888 internal organizer Darlene Archibald presented management with statistics showing that the lower-paid Hopkinton workers were underpaid compared to comparable communities. In addition, research showing that Hopkinton's school cafeteria



FOOD SERVICE WORKERS HONORED: Pegge Minkle, left, chapter president, and June Iadorola held a “Food Is Love” banner last fall. Both of them served on the negotiating team for the Local 888 cafeteria chapter in Hopkinton.

workers were not receiving equal pay for comparable work helped sway management's

negotiators, said Archibald. But management still wanted to
See page 4 for more on cafeteria

Bump up in pay for City Hall members

Local 888's Chelsea City Hall members have taken a giant "step" toward improving their salaries.

The recently ratified three-year contract includes cost-of-living increases of 8.5 percent over three years. In addition, there is a 1 percent bump for steps 6 and 7 of the contract.

That means that workers at the top of the pay scale got an additional 2 percent increase on top of the cost-of-living raises.

"More than half of our members got that 2 percent jump right away, along with retro pay," said **Richard Zullo**, chapter president and a member of the bargaining committee. "Overall, the members are very happy with it."

In addition, there were improvements with the new contract, including an increase in the uniform allowance for the animal control officer and the car allowance for inspectors.

"We've been fortunate; the city has money," he added. "It's not like the bad old days in the 1990s, when the state put Chelsea into receivership." The chapter, with about 38 members, includes clerks, office managers,



RATIFICATION CELEBRATION! Members of the Chelsea City Hall negotiation team take a break after a successful vote for a new contract. They are, from left: **Paulette Velastegui**, **Richard Zullo**, **Naomi Libran** and **Scott Bridges**.

inspectors and building and grounds workers.

While he is proud of the new contract, Zullo said that, next time around he'd like to do more for the younger workers who are lower on the pay scale. "I'd like to fight for the kids who just came on."

Chelsea Soldiers' Home one of 'best' in state

U.S. News & World Report rated the Chelsea Soldiers' Home as one of the best in Massachusetts. The magazine gave Chelsea a "highest overall rating" of five out of five and designated it a "U.S. News Best Nursing Home."

"This rating verifies the excellent care and dedication that our members and other Chelsea Home staff deliver," said Local 888 President **Brenda Rodrigues**. "At the same time, our members deserve the on-the-job respect and dignity their service has earned them. Our members deserve clear opportunities to get the assignments they want."

U.S. News said that there are 388 nursing homes in Massachusetts. The Chelsea Home, where about 300 members are united in Local 888, was one of only 38 that received an overall rating of 5 out of 5. The state-run facility has 88 beds.



RODRIGUES

Among its conclusions, U.S. News rated the Chelsea Home as performing above average on such categories as preventing patient visits to emergency rooms: "Fewer hospitalizations is indicative of quality of care and patient safety."

Also, the report said that the Chelsea Home did a superb job at limiting the use of "anti-anxiety and hypnotic drugs." Regarding this issue, the report said: "High levels of use of these drugs can indicate inappropriate use for behavior control rather than for medical treatment."

For more on the U.S. News ratings of nursing homes, see <https://health.usnews.com/best-nursing-homes>.

Get to 'Know Your Rights'

Local 888 will offer a series of trainings for members and leaders this spring. The "Know Your Rights Training" shows members how to exercise their workplace rights and support each other on the shop floor.

"Workers' rights an essential cornerstone of workplace fairness," said Local 888 President **Brenda Rodrigues**. "The first step in exercising those rights, for an individual or a chapter, is to educate ourselves about the law and court rulings."

These include: The right to have a union steward present if you are called into an interview by management that could result in discipline. But you must ask for a steward if you want one.

This right to have a steward is part of what has become known as Weingarten Rights, after a 1975 U.S. Supreme Court decision.

The first two "Know Your Rights Trainings" will take place:

- Wed., March 11, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 1240 Massachusetts Ave, Plumbers & Gasfitters Local 12, Dorchester.
- Wed., April 15, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Scituate Library, 85 Branch St., Scituate

A combined "Leadership & Know Your Rights Training" will be:

- Sat., March 21, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., SEIU Local 888 office, 25 Braintree Hill Park, No. 306, Braintree.

To register or learn about other trainings, go to www.seiu888.org or call 617-241-3300.

Coming Attractions

LOCAL 888 LEADERS MEET: The SEIU Local 888 Executive Board meets Wed, Feb. 12, 10:00 a.m. at the union's conference room at 25 Braintree Hill Office Park, in Braintree. The executive board is the governing body of Local 888.



CROSSING GUARDS APPRECIATION DAY: Thurs., Feb 13.



HEALTHY AGREEMENT: Michelle DaSilva, left, CAAS Head Start employee and union leader, and internal organizer Madeline Soto celebrate the ratification of a new contract.

Head Start workers OK pact

Workers at the Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS) overwhelmingly approved a new contract that boosts wages while maintaining a comprehensive health insurance plan at a low cost.

The biggest stumbling block in negotiations was the health plan. Management was looking to cut costs by making workers pay a higher percentage of the costs and get less-comprehensive coverage. Also, CAAS wanted workers to pay, retroactively, for the increased cost of premiums. The contract covers about 47 Local 888 members.

"Our negotiating committee stayed strong and united," said **Michelle DaSilva**, a 20-year CAAS employee and union leader. "Having the expertise of Local 888 staff gave us the support we needed to keep our excellent health benefits."

Union members contribute 11 percent of the cost of insurance premiums, while the employer covers the rest of the Local 888-administrated plan. One reason negotiations moved forward: The union was able to find a new insurance provider. Premiums will only go up 4 percent, but CAAS will continue to cover 89 percent of the overall cost.

CAAS runs Head Start in Cambridge and Somerville. For the full report, see <http://www.seiu888.org/2020/02/06/head-start-workers-ok-pact/>.

Focus on young workers

The Labor Guild and its youth caucus are sponsoring a free, four-part “Young Worker Workshop Series” starting with a Feb. 11 event featuring Local 888’s chief of staff, Rand Wilson, and former director of field operations, Lisa Field.

THE LABOR
GUILD

“This series of talks is a great opportunity to meet other members and leaders from a variety of unions,” said Wilson. “I’m going to focus on the overall picture of what you need to know to be a good union leader. I’ll highlight how the Labor Guild’s classes are a great resource — and how they can be built upon.”

The Young Worker Series will be:

- **Feb 11:** “Where To Go from Here—What You Can Do with Your Labor Education,” featuring Wilson and Field.
- **Feb 18:** “Internal Organizing,” featuring Mike Vartabedian, International Association of Machinists Local 264, and Darlene Lombos, secretary treasurer, Greater Boston Labor Council
- **Feb 25:** “Building Coalitions.”
- **Mar 3:** “Anti-racism,” featuring state Rep. Liz Miranda and others.

Workshops will be held at Teamsters Local 25 in Charlestown from 5 to 8 p.m. Food will be provided. For more information on the series, visit <http://laborguild.com/youthcaucus/>.

Big leap in Winchester chapter

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And new hires will start at a significantly higher rate than under the old contract.

In addition, the pact creates a night-shift differential of 75 cents per hour. And cost-of-living raises are 1.5 percent over the first and second year of the contract and 2 percent in the last year.

The result will be increases of about 11 to 14 percent over three years. In addition to that, the step raises created under the revamped pay scale will boost workers’ wages even further over time. For a full report, see <http://www.seiu888.org/2020/02/06/custodians-make-big-leap/>.

Moments of Silence

The officers and staff of Local 888 extend our deepest sympathies to the families of:



- **Michael Moran**, 33, Scituate. He was the son of **Michelle Moran**, chapter president of the Scituate school secretaries.
- **Algird "Al" A. Zenkus**, 67, of Worcester, a Local 888 retiree who served as a dedicated shop steward and executive board member. He was an electrician for the Worcester Housing Authority for 32 years prior to his retirement.
- **Clarence “Jeep” Jones**, 86, father of Meta Jones, an employee at Boston’s Department of Neighborhood Development and a member of Local 888. He served as deputy mayor under Mayor Kevin White before being appointed to the BRA board, from which he retired in 2013. A park off Boston’s Malcolm X Boulevard bears his name.
- **Charles “Chuck” Henry Turner**, 79, of Roxbury, died at home following a long battle with cancer. He served as a Boston city councilor and was a longtime activist with such groups as the Boston Jobs Coalition.

Hopkinton holds onto benefits

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cut benefits. Ultimately, Minkle and the negotiation team called a chapter meeting to listen to what members could accept. “We had a full room,” said Minkle, a cook and kitchen manager.

“The message came in loud and clear: We do not want to lose any benefits at all,” said Minkle. “People really cared about this. After that, everybody came together.”

The negotiation team went back to the bargaining table. “I told management our members were just not going to accept the elimination of benefits,” said Minkle.

Finally, management relented. “We’re very pleased with the contract,” said Minkle. Now, union members will be getting raises, other adjustments in compensation and months of retroactive pay. For a full report, see <http://www.seiu888.org/2020/02/06/hopkinton-members-unity-stops-benefit-cuts/>.

