

AFSCME LOCAL 391 NEWSLETTER

From the President's Desk:

The Executive Board of Local 391 would like to wish you and yours a very happy and prosperous holiday season. We thank you and appreciate the sacrifices you make for all during the holiday season, while others enjoy the season because of your sacrifices and for that, we thank you on behalf of all the communities you keep safe.

As we have preached since our days of originally running for office, we promise transparency. The rumors swirling about contract and SEBAC are regularly answered at our meetings as well as by stopping in the Local 391 office, or just calling any of the Executive Board members numbers listed in your calendars or just at the office phone number [860-745-0391](tel:860-745-0391). The contract is in arbitration. There has been many hours of effort put forth to negotiate the best terms for all our members. Having expressed that, ***NO monetary agreements have been made***. All tentative agreements have been to "clean up" old and expired language since most of the contract is 10+ years old. As for SEBAC, we, Local 391 have a designated Executive Board member ***attend EVERY SEBAC meeting!*** Anything that happens at those meetings is immediately shared with the board and available for all members. SEBAC leaders ***can*** vote to open negotiations, (and we will know if they do). SEBAC leaders can then negotiate changes to the contract and vote to close negotiations (again, we will know if they do). The changes must be then approved by a ***SUPER MAJORITY*** of the membership of SEBAC which is 66.7% to be ratified. If, we, the membership of SEBAC, ratify the new agreement, it will then need Legislative approval to fully executed. The recent news about changes to SEBAC were extra-contractual, non-negotiable changes to the funding, which is not outlined in the current agreement. So, in summation, the SEBAC agreement can be changed, but we will know, how, what, why, and when...and we are prepared to inform you when you ask. Let us not forget, the current agreement expires 7/1/22, so if you are ***not retiring*** before that 7/1/22, ***WE have to negotiate SEBAC***, at some point prior to then....

On the positive notes, our Local is in good financial shape and strives to serve you, the members. We had another successful year full of great events, services and trainings for the membership and their families. This year we moved to a new, more efficient property, which provides us with ample parking and first floor accommodations, which affords us the ability to have membership meetings, tri-local meetings, and training at our location. We are always adding new discounts, services and trainings to you, so inquire about getting more involved. We provide much, much more than help with disciplinary problems. AFSCME International (our union) has extended an offer, for all members and their families, for FREE college classes to achieve your Associates Degree in several different majors, and we, the Local, will provide any necessary resources to assist in that process. We currently are seeking individuals interested in this to lead study groups and offer assistance weekly or bi-weekly in the Local union office. We also now offer document shredding through INFOSHRED at our office for members. Our other services are available Monday through Friday 9 am - 3pm such as FAX, Internet/Wi-Fi and printing of any union/work related documents.

Officers Mess Hall & Gym Upgrade

By Dave Caron Vice President

As reminder from the last newsletter I am a sitting member of the Stress Reduction Committee. The committee is tasked with trying to find ways to reduce stress in the workplace. If there is things your Gym or OM needs or needs upgraded please contact me. Since the last newsletter only CTU contacted me. I toured CTU base and was able to get everything they needed approved through the committee and the purchase orders have been submitted to DOC. Now we are just waiting for the items to be purchased and handed over to the committee to deliver. So if your Gym or OM is lacking equipment or needs updating contact me Dave Caron Vice President or leave a detailed message for me with the Office Manager April. That way I may tour your facility and put forward proposals to the committee for authorization to file purchase orders for items your facility may need.

FMLA and Benefits **Protect your Health, Pension, Family, & Job**

By Dave Caron Vice President

I wanted to take a moment to let everyone know that Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is benefit afforded to us that most are hesitant to use. FMLA is not nearly as hard to use as you may have thought if you are using it for the right reasons. I also wanted to remind everybody to make sure every year you update your beneficiaries on all of your policies and accounts that you may have. Because one day you can wake up and get slapped in the face with a terminal illness or a life changing accident.

This is just an example of what happened to me in recent months and it has opened my eyes and made me realize the importance of keeping track of these things. I had an ongoing sinus infection that would not go away. I woke up one morning so swollen and in so much pain I went straight to my Dr. He thought I had Bells Palsy caused by Lyme Disease. He sent me for a Lyme Disease test and started treating me for it before the results came back. The test came back negative for Lyme Disease but I was improving so we continued with the treatment. When I finished my antibiotics and steroids the swelling and pain came right back. The Dr. Started me on a second regiment of antibiotics and steroids. Once again I was improving until I finished my antibiotics and steroids. Then swelling and pain came right back. My Dr. finally sent me to an Ear Nose & Throat Dr. He took one look at me and said this is bad we need to do a biopsy. Two weeks later I was diagnosed with an extremely rare type of cancer called NK-T Cell Lymphoma. My EN&T Dr. and my first oncologist told me it was terminal. So they referred me to an oncologist at Saint Francis who specializes in Lymphoma and in facial cancer. So my second oncologist ran some more test on me

and found that I had a grape size tumor in my sinuses. He said that this type of cancer is beatable but it is hard to and would like to talk to one of his colleagues at Yale-New Haven Smilow Cancer Center. A few days later I got a call from oncologist #2 telling to go see oncologist #3 at Yale. My wife and I went to see oncologist #3 at Yale who turned out to be a world renowned expert in my specific rare type of NK-T Cell Lymphoma. She actually designs treatment plans and gets them FDA approved for my type of cancer. She had treatment plans the other oncologist didn't even know existed. She took one look at me and said oh we caught this early and you are young. With the new treatments I have designed you will be ok. She warned me that with Chemotherapy and Laser Radiation I will get sick and it will be a hard road but I will beat it.

I was distraught my life got turned upside down at the age of 35. I thought I was going to die and I had so many things that I had to get in order before that day came and I had no idea where to begin. Needless to say in the beginning I was in shock. As far as I knew I was terminal for the first few weeks until I got to the right Dr.'s who finally told me it was treatable and I would survive this life changing event. I started with the department at a young age while I was still single and never changed any of my beneficiaries even after I've got married and had children. So here I am 35 years old with a wife, three beautiful daughters, a house, cars, and like the rest of us bills. Here I was staring death in the eyes and had no idea what I was going to do. I knew I needed FMLA and no clue how to go about getting FMLA and at the same time I wanted my privacy. I must say HR was extremely helpful privacy was of the utmost importance to them as well. Believe it or not it is harder to get your FMLA filled on your DR.'s end than on HR's end. I was shocked to find out most Dr.'s take on average two to three weeks to fill out a page and a half of FMLA paperwork and some charge as much as \$20 to fill out the form. Luckily for me HR helped me with my FMLA package and brought up the fact of making sure my beneficiaries were up to date on life insurance and retirement paperwork. Then I thought about every account and policy I had besides DOC polices. I was in rush to add my wife even after I was told I would survive because what if something went wrong.

So the moral of this story is so that you know where to go and remember what to do. You should go out and update all of your policies as soon as you read this just to be safe even your policies out of work. You should consider purchasing Short Term Disability Insurance and Long Term Disability Insurance so if you run out of accrued time you can still receive a paycheck. The insurance policies must be purchased prior to being diagnosed in order for them to pay for the illness. I recommend discussing with you Dr. about at what point you should file for FMLA. The real reason for FMLA is so that you don't violate A.D. 2.11 for occurrences. Please take this serious and protect yourself and your family, it was a terrifying experience for me and hopefully this can save you some of the struggle I went through. Please if you find yourself going through a serious illness and need help or just someone to talk to who can relate do not hesitate to call me. Dave (860)837-3148 if I don't answer just leave me a message and I will call you back. It is important to have a support system in place.

THE BARRACKS

THIS SECTION DISCUSSES TOPICS INVOLVING LOCAL 391 MEMBERS THAT ARE VETERANS OR CURRENTLY SERVING IN THE US ARMED FORCES

BY C/O ROBERT O. BEAMON (CRCI) USMC/US. ARMY

SALUTE

This Issue we honor and mourn the death of fallen New York City Correctional Officer Anastasia Bryan, who was murdered while off duty. The 25 year old officer was the youngest officer on the force.



New Military Retirement System

You might be aware that on January 1, 2018, the Department of Defense will introduce a new military retirement system known as the "Blended Retirement System." Anyone who joins the military from that date onward will be covered by the new retirement system. All current members, including you, will be grandfathered under the current retirement plan. While grandfathered, those Reserve Component members who have accrued fewer than 4,320 retirement points as of December 31, 2017, will have the option to switch to the new retirement system if they so choose.

This new plan represents a significant change from the current military retirement as Service members will now be eligible to receive government contributions to their Thrift Savings Plans in exchange for a reduced pension upon retirement. While you have a choice to make, it is important to note that you will remain covered under your current retirement plan unless you choose to switch. You will automatically stay in the current system unless you actively decide to switch to the Blended Retirement System. Also, should you surpass 4,320 points by December 31, 2017, you will no longer be eligible to opt-in.

The first opportunity to elect to enroll in the Blended Retirement System will be on January 1, 2018. You will have the entirety of 2018 to make your election. However, once you enroll in the Blended Retirement System, that election is irrevocable. Before you make this decision, you will need to complete online training to better inform you of the benefits under your current retirement system compared to the benefits of the Blended Retirement System. This course, the Blended Retirement System Opt-In Course

on Joint Knowledge Online, will be available to Service members beginning in January 2017. This course will

be located here: <https://jkodirect.jten.mil/> there will be additional information with you through this newsletter over the coming year to advise you of the process for making your decision. There are many services available to assist you and your family as you consider your options, including benefits educators, Retirement Service Officers (RSOs), Personal Financial Managers (located at Installation Management Command (IMCOM) facilities, or Army Community Services), Army Financial Partners (OneSource, Credit Unions, etc.), call centers, and MyArmyBenefits, just to name a few. It is important to note that this is an individual decision that you should make only after completing the mandatory training and utilizing any available financial education resources. The Blended Retirement System will not be right for everyone, so it is important to consider the specifics of your individual situation in making this choice. The Opt-In Course will assist you with understanding the factors you should consider.

Updates from the Office Manager:

As we close out on 2016 we look back and thank you for attending the events of the year.

Due to thin ice, we were not able to have the annual ice fishing tournament in 2016. We are keeping our fingers crossed that some cold is on our way so we can have it this year! The tournament will take place on January 28th at Hamilton Reservoir in Holland MA from 5:30AM – 3:00PM.



The summer bash at High Meadow was a great success, with a lot of fun, great weather, food, and company. The 2017 summer bash will be on August 21st held at High Meadow. We are excited for another great year



Our children's holiday party at the Trolley Museum has been the best yet! We loved seeing so many children excited to see Santa and ride the trolley's, while enjoying cookies and pizza. In the theater families got to watch Rudolph and do some arts and crafts. We are looking forward to planning our 2017 Children's Holiday Party and making it even better than the last!

New Year's Eve was another successful year for pizza deliveries. A little something the Executive Board at Local 391 likes to do to show how much you are all appreciated and the hard work you do.

The **annual scholarship** is open for applications. Eligible recipients are the dependents of active and retired members. You can head on over to <http://www.local391.org/scholarship.html> to view the requirements and to apply online. The deadline is Friday February 10th at 3:00 PM (close of business).

To keep up to date on all the events Local 391 has upcoming please check out our website at local391.org/events