

SEIU Local 517M E-Former – August 2016 Edition



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SEIU Local 517M Annual Conference Participating Plan for the Future

On July 22, 2016, over 90 member leaders attended the 2016 SEIU Local 517M Annual Conference in Mt. Pleasant. The conference this year had a more hands-on component for input into the future of the Union.

The day started with a video recap of the 2016 SEIU International Convention that was held earlier this year in Detroit. The videos shown included a recap video produced by the International; a welcome speech from our very own **Brenda Greene**, Unit President from Flint Community Schools, during the Public Division meeting held at the convention and the rousing speech by the Reverend **William Barber II**. SEIU President **Mary Kay Henry**'s opening remarks were also shown. The links to the videos are below:

Rev. Barber: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1IF3zml6VE>

Brenda Greene: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVfwMAHymUI&feature=youtu.be>

Mary Kay Henry: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQREkunpKDM>

Convention Recap: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwwsMwSrAhY>



Other presentations included the new SEIU Member Benefit program and a presentation on the financial services provided by Mainstay Capital Management.

State Representative **Gretchen Driskell** also stopped by and made a few remarks to the group.

The School and Local Government Action Team gave a presentation on their activities centered around member engagement.

The SEIU Conservative Caucus was discussed by **Andy Potter** from the Michigan Corrections Organization and our representative **Bill Ruhf** (pictured right). They emphasized the need to be inclusive of all viewpoints and Bill wants to meet with members on those conservative topics, with more information coming soon.



Recognition was the order of the day. The AFRAM Caucus of SEIU Local 517M recognized (pictured L-R) **Roberta Oldenburg** and **Stephanie Teamer** for their work with the Caucus. There was a special recognition for member Theresa Ely from Dearborn Heights Schools for her Whistleblower activities (see Region 3 Activity story below).

There was also the annual SEIU Local 517M Member of the Year presentation. Each School and Local Government Region and State Employee Unit nominate a member to be honored at the annual meeting. The 2016 winners are:



Human Services Support Unit: **Ellina Simmons-Gibson** (*photo Left Top: 517M President George Heath, Ellina Simmons-Gibson, HSS President Joey Combs*)

Scientific and Engineering Unit: **Amy Lipset**

Technical Unit: **Tim Gierman** (*photo Left Middle: 517M President George Heath, Tim Gierman, Tech President Arnold Beller*)



School and Local Government Region 1: **Leticia Trevino** (City of Saginaw)

School and Local Government Region 2: **Dennis Hussey** (Grand Haven Schools) (*photo Left bottom: 517M President George Heath, Dennis Hussey, Region 2 Divisional VP Eric Campbell*)



School and Local Government Region 3: **Brenda Greene** (Flint Community Schools)

(*Not in attendance were Amy Lipset, Leticia Trevino, and Brenda Greene*)

The afternoon program was dedicated to the planning for our future. **Allison Porter** (pictured right) from the BOLD Center (Building Organizations and Leadership Development) came to facilitate strategic planning for the Local. The BOLD Center is a program within the International Union that supports SEIU locals in all aspects of organizational and leadership development.



Members were broken into groups to discuss what they wanted their union to focus on for the next 3 years. This was a



continuation of the process that began the day before with the Local 517M Executive Board. A committee of members and staff will be appointed in the near future to continue the work

and come up with implementation strategies for the finalized plan.

Support SEIU Members in Holland on August 2nd!



SEIU Local 517M represents the librarians at the Herrick Public Libraries and we are supporting the renewal of the library millage that will be on the **Tuesday, August 2nd primary ballot.**

Because the Library is now its own taxing unit, the ballot language has to call the renewal “new and additional”. Michigan’s Headlee amendment limits property tax rates to the rate of inflation which caused the millage to be rolled back to 1.2389 instead of 1.5 mills originally voted on. The loss of property tax revenue then declined, causing the Library to cut back on days and hours of operation and eliminated much needed staff at a time when Library usage has increased.

But with a **YES! Vote on Tuesday, August 2nd** the library millage will be restored to the originally voted of 1.5 mills. Homeowners with a home value of \$150,000 will pay about \$112 per year for the library. **That is 31 cents a day per household** to keep the community library open and available to all District Library residents.

If the millage passes the Library is planning to bring back Sunday hours, increase evening hours and provide necessary upgrades to the facilities. WE can tell you OUR librarians love working with the patrons of the Library and are excited about new and improved programming opportunities for our kids, our seniors and those who utilize all the services provided at the Library.

For more information on the Herrick District Library Millage please visit the Facebook page at “YES Herrick District Library” or web page at www.yeshdl.org.

We endorse a YES! vote on the Herrick Library Millage on Tuesday, August 2nd primary ballot.

Spots Remain for the SEIU Local 517M Golf Outing on August 12th



There are still spots remaining for the annual SEIU Local 517M golf outing being held on Friday, August 12, 2016 at the Wheatfield Valley Golf Course in Williamston. The 4-person scramble will start with registration at 8:00 a.m. and shotgun start at 9:00 a.m. Registration cost is \$240 per foursome. The registration form and information is available at: <http://www.seiu517m.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/40/files/2016/03/Golf-outing-flyer.pdf>

Activity in School and Local Government Region 3

City of Royal Oak- a tentative agreement has been ratified by both parties recently and has brought bargaining to a close. The contract is for three years and has a 2.5% wage increase for each year of the agreement (a 7.69% total raise over the life of the contract). The employer has also agreed to increase their contribution to retirement plans and retirement health insurance, additional money for uniforms and equipment, and we were able to close the gap in paid personal days between new hires and more senior personnel.

Dearborn Heights- On June 30th, 2016, union steward, **Theresa Ely**, was awarded a sum in excess



of \$200,000 in a report by Federal OSHA that found that the employer, Dearborn Heights School District No. 7, had exposed its employees to asbestos and retaliated against employees that spoke out on the matter. The investigation occurred over three years and found that employees were ordered to dry sand asbestos tile without any respirators or safety equipment leading to an exposure that has affected employees, staff, and possibly students. When Theresa and other members found that the tiles did in fact contain asbestos, they filed a report with OSHA, and were subsequently denied promotions and raises. The school district also

attempted to cover-up the exposure through the creation of falsified documents that made it seem that the tiles had been tested by an independent party and that they did not contain asbestos. OSHA is still conducting investigations concerning two other members that were also exposed and members are fighting to have the school board remove the supervisor that is responsible for the dangerous work-orders.

We are calling on our fellow members at SEIU Local 517M to stand in solidarity with us as we address the School Board at their August 2nd meeting. We have to take a public stand to ensure that our members, staff, teachers, and students at Dearborn Heights District No.7 have safe workplaces and classrooms. As long as Mr. Nicholl is still working, we cannot be assured that the facilities are safe. The school board meeting will take place on Tuesday, August 2nd at 6:00 PM at the Board Office (20629 Annapolis, Dearborn Heights, MI 48125).

PLEASE RSVP to Danny Ritter at dritter@seiu517m.org or by phone at (803) 354-1277.

HNNP ULP - On June 16th, 2016, SEIU Local 517M members held an informational picket in Detroit in order to bring attention to the low wages, wage theft, dangerous working conditions, and unfair labor practices they have been facing from their employer, Hope Network New Passages. The rally took place at the Robert V. McNamara Federal Building where the National Labor Relations Board was holding a hearing concerning the wage theft of the employees' bonuses last July. The bonuses were given once a year, per the contract, but the employer decided to withhold the final bonus on July 1st, 2015, in retaliation for the union prevailing on a previous ULP charge. In that charge, the employer was found to be guilty of bargaining in bad faith and illegally imposing a contract on the membership.



The rally saw turnout from worksites across the state and allies from our sister Local Healthcare Michigan came out in solidarity and joined in the protest. The move clearly got under the employer's skin because shortly afterwards the employer threatened to sue the union for characterizing the withholding of the bonuses as "wage theft." The employer has yet to follow through with that threat and we continue to assert the obvious fact that the bonuses were stolen from the employees. We are optimistic that the NLRB will rule in our favor and return the bonuses with interest to our members.

Memphis Community Schools- SEIU Local 517M and Memphis Community Schools have reached a tentative agreement that has secured a 2% raise (the first in 14 years) while also successfully ensuring that our members' jobs will not be outsourced. Last year our members beat back an attempt by the school board to privatize the school's food service by mobilizing parents, students, and the community against the efforts to outsource. While the Food Service Budget is still in deficit due to declining student enrollment, members have done an excellent job keeping costs down and the board agreed that it would not seek a request for proposals for the food service program for the upcoming fiscal year.

Mott Community College- SEIU local 517M has endorsed the millage renewal for Mott Community College which will be decided by voters on August 2nd, 2016. Members who work at Mott Community College believe that the millage is an absolutely necessary initiative that would assist the college in difficult times. The Union is also working on efforts to galvanize and mobilize our membership to advocate for the passage of the millage. Affordable, accessible, and community focused education cannot be allowed to falter in the wake of the many crises that are afflicting Flint and its neighboring communities. SEIU believes education is a right and that its provision is necessary if workers are to advance economically and engage as citizens within their communities. Mott Community College must be made one of the key institutions in any plan that seeks to revive our community and the resources of any such plan require that the millage remain intact.

Executive Director Meets Secretary of Labor Perez



SEIU Local 517M Executive Director **Liza Estlund Olson** had the opportunity to listen to a great speech by Secretary of Labor **Thomas Perez**. She had the opportunity to personally thank him for his staff's efforts on behalf of our members in Dearborn Heights Schools and the asbestos exposure to our members working there. (*See the Dearborn Heights section of the previous article.*)

Pop the Vote Event Planned in Saginaw



On July 18th, Member Political Organizers **Betty Smith** (second from right) and **Jeanette Barnett** (far right) delivered a check on behalf of SEIU Local 517M to **Ben Champaign** (center), Director of Counter Culture. SEIU 517M will be partnering with Eziekiel Project, LLEAD, Counter Culture, other Unions and businesses in the Saginaw area to put on a one-day concert/ cultural event dedicated to registering voters in the Great

Lakes Bay Region. This will occur on August 21st at the 300 Block of South Hamilton Street in Saginaw.

From The Archives: A Lesson in Labor History from the Reuther Library

SEIU and Clinton Raise the Minimum Wage

By Gavin Strassel, SEIU Archivist



The essential rallying cry for SEIU today, "Fight for \$15" is rooted in the union's history of advocating for a livable minimum wage in America. 1996 saw a victorious increase in the national minimum wage, signed into law by President **Bill Clinton** twenty years ago this month. As Clinton signed the bill in Washington D.C., he was joined onstage by then SEIU International President **John Sweeney**. (Pictured Left: President Bill Clinton signs the 1996 Minimum Wage Bill. SEIU President John Sweeney (front row, far left) looks on with Senator Ted Kennedy.)



This honor reflected labor's vital support for the bill, of which SEIU was at the forefront. At the SEIU International Convention the previous April, Clinton laid out his plan for the bill. Building on an emphasis to make the union more activist driven than the previous decade, SEIU's rank-and-file mobilized and led demonstrations to support the proposed minimum wage. (Pictured Left: Local 880 demonstrators carry a banner during the Chicago Living Wage and Job Campaign Demonstration during the 21st SEIU International Convention in Chicago, Illinois, 1996.)



These rallies for a living wage took place across the nation and garnered the public's approval for the bill. With its passage, the minimum wage rose from \$4.25 to \$5.15. In the following years, SEIU has continued fighting for a better minimum wage, eventually leading to the current Fight for \$15 campaign that is shaping America's perception of the new labor movement. (Picture Left: Demonstrators at the Minimum Wage Rally in Washington, D.C., May, 1996.)



Gavin Strassel is the SEIU Archivist at the Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs at Wayne State University, the official repository for SEIU and the largest labor archives in North America. If you are interested in performing research with the SEIU collections, please contact Gavin at strassel@wayne.edu.

To learn more about SEIU and Michigan labor history click here: <http://reuther.wayne.edu/index.php>

Calendar of Upcoming Union Events for August, 2016

August 8: Scientific and Engineering Unit Board Meeting, Lansing

August 11: Technical Unit Board Meeting, Lansing

August 12: SEIU Local 517M Golf Outing, Williamston

For more information on the above events, consult our on-line calendar at:

<http://www.seiu517m.org/events/month/>

The monthly subscription for the E-Former is included in your membership dues payment and is intended for members in good standing of SEIU Local 517M.



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