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# 21 NEWS

Editor: Gerald Kell [WWW.USW2-21.COM](http://WWW.USW2-21.COM) October, 2015  
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21 News is a periodic publication of USW (United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union) Local 2-21, 1201 Sheridan Road, Escanaba, Michigan 49829. The views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily that of the International Union, the Local 2-21 membership, or the officers of these bodies. The editor reserves the right to refuse any article that is detrimental to the Local Union or the USW. Article accuracy and content is the responsibility of the author.

## Important Information & Events

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

[www.guidanceresources.com](http://www.guidanceresources.com) (800) 428-4650

### Retiree Get Together

First Wednesday of month 10am at the Union Hall

**Union Meeting:** Second Wednesday - 7 pm – Dinner 6 pm

**Next Generation Meeting:** : Second Wed - 5 pm at the Hall

**Steward's Meeting:** Fourth Wednesday - 3 pm at the Hall

**Welfare Club Meeting:** First Monday of the month - 7 pm at the Mead Rod & Gun Club

**Total Benefit Solutions:** Union Hall Hours on the first two Wednesdays of each month. Call 1-877-265-2212 to schedule an appointment.



## Committee Members

	Work	Cell
President Steve Benoit .....	233-2366	399-4195
1st Vice Chuck Way.....	233-2705	280-1698
2nd Vice Joe Curran .....	233-2511	420-3918
3rd Vice Jeff Skorupski.....	233-2556	399-5472
Insurance Gerald Kell.....	233-3062	869-7943
Comp Ross Strand.....	233-2549	280-1494
Secretary Brandon Stromberg.....	233-2714	284-1604
Treasurer Guy Trudell.....	233-2922	399-9143
Next Gen/Rapid Response..Brandon Stromberg....	233-2714	284-1604
Rapid Response.....Gerald Kell.....	233-3062	869-7943
Hall Rentals .....	Steve Kennedy . . . . .	789-1933



[www.pacelocal21.proboards.com](http://www.pacelocal21.proboards.com)



[www.facebook.com/USWlocal21](http://www.facebook.com/USWlocal21)

## Several Updates

*Steve Benoit, President*

My move back to E-1 winders has proven to be quite interesting; learning to run the winder again has shown that as I get older things do not come back to me as easily as they once did. I would like to thank each and every member I worked with on the Hazard Mapping over the past three years. There's much pride to be had for those that have put in the time and effort into Hazard Mapping. You've each assisted in making significant changes in the areas in which you implemented these safety initiatives.

Returning to the winders has also provided me with a renewed opportunity to speak with a great deal of members and I realize that many of you are bothered by the direction management is taking us. Some of the recent things that most of you have spoken about is your concern with the amount of money that is being spent on the outside and entrance to the mill when we have yet to see the 401(k) contribution returned, or while many of the issues in our areas that need to be cleaned up or fixed have not been addressed. I have heard that the changes up front are a positive thing but it's understandably tough to digest while watching our Union brothers and sisters in Kentucky fight for a severance. Please continue to be vocal with your concerns to management and stand strong for the changes we need.

We have reached out to District Director Bolton in regards to returning the suspended 401(k) match to see what information he has received from the Company. Mike responded via email stating that he has reached out to the Company and has not heard anything as of yet. He will continue to pursue them and will inform us about any information. The grievance that was filed on the 401(k) will be moving to a 3<sup>rd</sup> step.

Unfortunately, one of our Union brothers was let go this last week due to a number of crane accidents in

the mill. Let me be clear, the Company chose to discharge him and I feel that the punishment did not properly address the situation. We spoke about the viable options at length with this Union brother, but in the end, he decided to take a separation agreement offered by the Company. According to that agreement we are not allowed to grieve anything on his behalf. I respect his decision to accept this agreement and understand that he was simply looking out for the best interest of him and his family. We will, however, be grieving that the Company did not properly follow the progressive discipline outlined in the side agreement that I've included at the end of this newsletter. At no time did our brother receive the discipline in the first two steps of this agreement. Stay tuned for more information on this. Please keep our brother and his family in your thoughts and prayers.

We have met with the Company about the smoking grievance and will begin bargaining in the near future. The company has stated that the plan to go smoke free in November will be postponed until after the 1<sup>st</sup> of the year. We will have more information in the coming months.

The Union committee will be traveling to Appleton this month for Collective Bargaining Training. This will help prepare our committee and the membership for the upcoming contract negotiations. We all need to prepare for this contract, be prepared to stand strong and fight for the rights and language our contract guarantees us. We will be asking for every member to take part in some part of our Union in the near future, whether it be assisting with the CAT Team, becoming a member of the Women of Steel, joining the Rapid Response team, the Organizing Committee, making a commitment to attend Union Meetings, becoming an Union Steward or taking part in a community event. I understand that all of us have very busy lives but many of these tasks require minimal commitment if we all do our part. These programs need assistance, so please take some time to consider which aspect of the union you would like to participate and help us fight for our rights, the community, and our families. Thank you for your consideration.

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*Your thoughts wanted here!  
Do you have an article you'd like to submit  
or a topic you'd like us  
to cover? Contact the editor today!*

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## **Bidding Process**

*Joe Curran, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President*

The following information is regarding the job bidding process and mill trainee placement policy as outlined in your Labor Agreement. The job bidding process can be confusing while simultaneously an intriguing process. It allows employees to see what job may be the best for their skillset. Below you will find excerpts of contract articles and sections within said articles which outline timeframes, penalties, and seniority.

I realize that not everyone has a contract readily available so with respect to interpretation and misinterpretation this article is mostly copy and paste. Most questions can be answered by looking at the language provided but I strongly encourage you to contact a committee member or steward if you have any questions about this information as it can be confusing when applying it to temporary bids and first right of refusal which are as follows.

Temporary bids allow you to have first rights of refusal to the line of progression to which bid you accept. For example; if you bid to the Utility job on E1 Winders (God bless your soul) you would have bid rights to E1 Winders specifically and not the entire winder department (E3, E4 and Reprocessing). Departments and Lines of Progression are two separate avenues to bidding with respect to permanent or temporary bidding.

If you have come off a temporary bid to E1 Winders and now are permanent you have first rights to those departmental jobs with the entire mill (E3, E4 and Reprocessing). The same goes for the Supers, Coaters, Paper Machines, Steam Plant Department and the Color Building lines, etc. I apologize if I missed a department but you get the point. Sentences preceded by an asterisk (\*) are added notes by yours truly.

### **Section 4. Job Posting**

When a known permanent job vacancy occurs on a starting job in a line of progression or on a job that is not in a line of progression, notice of such vacancy shall be posted simultaneously and awarded in accordance with the following sequence:

**Step 1.** Posted for seventy-two (72) hours exclusive of non-operating days to employees within the department in which the vacancy occurs (Applicable seniority: Department)

**Step 2.** Posted for seventy-two (72) hours exclusive of non-operating days, Saturdays and Sundays, to all employees within USW. (Applicable seniority: USW and/or Mill Trainee Placement referred to in Article 31)

**Step 3.** If the job vacancy cannot be filled following the steps outlined above, the Company shall fill the vacancy as it sees fit under the provisions of the Labor Agreement.

When a temporary job vacancy occurs (i.e. job incumbent is expected to return) on a starting job in a line of progression or on a job that is not in a line of progression, the Company shall determine whether to post a temporary bid.

### **Section 3. Seniority Retention**

Any employee who may be transferred to a job in another department within the jurisdiction of the Union shall retain their seniority on their former job.

This seniority may not be used, however, except in the event of a permanent crew reduction, or if within a period of three (3) months of date of transfer they are unable to satisfactorily perform the duties of the new job or if within eight (8) days *\*(this is also calendar days so this is potential for you to only see a few days before you must make a choice to accept bid or decline)* they request to be returned to their former job. In this latter event they will not be eligible for further consideration for transfer for a period of eight (8) months. In any event, employees who transfer to a job in another department under the terms of this Article will not be eligible to transfer more than three (3) times in any calendar year *\*(Important to remember this is calendar year which means January thru December and then the reset button is hit)*.

### **Section 4. Job Posting (Continued)**

Employees who are leaving on a vacation or a scheduled leave of absence and who wish to bid on a job classification in their absence may bid on that job classification by submitting their request in writing to the Human Resources Department prior to leaving for vacation or scheduled leave of absence *\*(I would give a copy of this to the Union as well, cover your bases)*.

The line or department seniority date will be the date of the posting. For positions that have entrance requirements, employees who bid these positions will not be required to accept such bid until they have completed and passed the entrance requirements for that department. Any employee who would have been awarded a job posting and then declines when asked, or who accepts a job posting and then declines before going on the job, shall not be awarded a job through job posting for a period of sixty (60) days following this action. Failure to pass necessary tests will be an exception to this rule.

The employee qualifying for the job shall be transferred following the end of two scheduled weeks from the time the job is awarded except during prime time, to be

defined as June, July, August, deer season, and Christmas week; in which case there will be four weeks to move them. If the qualifying employee cannot be moved within the prescribed time, they will be transferred for one day in order to build seniority and hold reinstatement rights to the bid position *\*(The Union and The Company have an agreement that no longer requires this step, the employee will have rights without being transferred for the one day period)*. The union agrees to waive the time constraint if any person who would have an impact on the move is off work for illness or accident. If the move is not made in the prescribed amount of time, the employee will be paid the difference in the rate of the two jobs, whichever is higher, plus \$4/day delay pay *\*(Watch your pay stubs for this is a frequent error)*.

Any new entrance tests or modification to tests will be agreed to by both the Company and the Union **(Please inform the Union if something changes in your area)**.

## **ARTICLE 31. MILL TRAINEE POOL**

### **Mill Trainee Placement Policy**

The following process will clarify how Mill Trainees will be placed:

**Step 1.** The senior mill trainee(s) may elect not to bid on a temporary or permanent job but will receive a decline mark if a mill trainee junior to them is awarded the job.

**Step 2.** The senior mill trainee that has received two decline marks will be assigned to the next eligible bid by seniority.

**Step 3.** In the event no employees bid, the most junior mill trainee will be placed on the job.

- When a mill trainee receives a decline mark, the 60-day bidding penalty referred to Article 11 - Section 4, does not apply.

When a mill trainee is assigned to a job, the eight (8) day trial period referred to in Article 11 – Section 3, does not apply.

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*"I am inferior of any man whose rights I trample under foot"*

*-Robert Green Ingersoll*

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## Extra Help Process

Jeff Skorupski, 3rd Vice President

Joe Curran and I have recently been involved in discussions with Human Resources about the process we currently use to fill Extra Help throughout the mill. As is, when Extra Help is needed an employee must be qualified to perform the required work in order to be eligible for the overtime. This process has become an issue in certain areas due to a shortage of available options. The Committee has discussed this in length and have come up with a proposal. We are putting this out to inform the membership before a final decision is made. We are leaning in the direction of having people move up on shift to accommodate the Extra Help as needed; this would mean if you're a Back Tender and an extra Stock Prep/Beater Engineer is needed they can call--according to the procedure--a person on their day off who is on a job below you and you would move up to cover the Extra help required. Keep in mind that the current procedure will be used and seniority will be honored, the only change would be that when the options run out, a person on a lower job could be called in and you may move up to cover.

We would like to see that all possible employees have the opportunity to work if they choose to do so. We are hoping to finalize this by the October Union meeting so please contact Joe Curran or myself between now and then and give us your thoughts. It is also on the Message Board for those who would prefer that route.



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## Turn off "Dark Stores"

Gerald Kell, Insurance Advocate/Editor

It's clear that we individually tend to align ourselves with certain 'teams' when it comes to sports fandom, political allegiance, religiosity, and so on. On any given Autumn day you can easily start a lengthy discussion by pitting a Detroit Lions fanatic against a Green Bay Packers loyal liege. While there is a quantifiable advantage and/or even a certain solace achieved through this harmonization, it's important not to become so



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aligned that we become myopic, or wear the proverbial blinders like a carthorse.

In the political realm, the ability to work with those who hold opposing views is considered reaching across the aisle. I'm no stranger to partisanship and cannot claim innocence in that department, but I certainly can appreciate and commend an effort that seeks and receives support from typically dissenting sides—as rare as that may be in today's political arena. There is, relatively speaking, an elevated validity commonly ascribed to bipartisan efforts which is why I lead with it, this isn't going to be your everyday Democrat vs. Republican, Conservative vs. Liberal, Stafford vs. Rodgers diatribe. I point this out now because the USW is currently involved in a growing bipartisan initiative to promote tax equality in our area that you will be hearing more about soon. Let me be honest, if the idea of bipartisanship tax equality legislation as it applies to potentially damning rulings by a tax tribunal in Lansing doesn't get you roused, I don't know what will!

So, you're not sure exactly which tax equality problem I'm referring to? Out of the many loopholes, abatements, subsidies, and ad valorem posters I have hanging in my tax law-themed bar, which one could stir me so vigorously to write this article? My top 3 reasons: Dark Stores, Dark Stores, Dark Stores. Knowing that we have a very informed and active membership, I'm sure many of you are already aware of this invasive issue. If you're not, I implore you to seek out the vast supply of information. My primary goal here is to plant the seed; besides, our Treasurer, Guy Trudell, has been incessantly groaning at the rising cost of publishing the newsletter lately and I could probably turn this into a 12 page dissertation if not reined in.

Before I summarize the idea behind Dark Stores, let me be clear that I hold a core belief that no individual or entity should pay more taxes than



he/she/it truly owes. It's often stated that the only two guarantees in life are death and taxes, and well, you can certainly control the level at which you're taxed, death doesn't lend to itself that negotiation. Regardless, when a tax burden is removed by a means of unfairly loading the weight onto narrower shoulders, we simply must react swiftly and concisely. A Dark Store is the term used to describe any one of the many corporations currently appealing to the state's tax tribunal to have their assessed taxable values dropped therefore lowering their property taxes. While appealing for proper taxation is unquestionably a right we all need to retain, their approach is different. Dark Stores are using a newly exposed loophole that allows them to take advantage of shuttered or closed retail locations that historically would not be a variable in the assessment equation. As you follow up with your individual research, be sure to focus in on deed restrictions. When these large entities receive these tax reductions, they have a devastating effect on our local economy and infrastructure—roads, schools, libraries, police and fire departments, etc.



To simplify and for the sake of brevity, I will use an analogy I've found adequate: John Q. Taxpayer owns a million dollar home on Main Street in Escanaba, he currently pays a tax rate applicable to the value of this home. John is approached by a law firm that has been appealing to the tax tribunal on behalf of wealthy homeowners for a profitable sum. John appeals for a tax reduction based on the fact that if he were to sell his home, the market price would be much lower than \$1 million dollars because there is a similar mansion in Sterling Heights that was foreclosed and will sell for \$400,000. He has also voluntarily placed a deed restriction on the home (that he has no actual plan to sell) that would prevent any purchaser from mowing the grass, changing the color of the siding, or having more than 1.5 children. The tax tribunal now awards John a new assessment at a lower rate and even has the amount he overpaid from the past 3 years returned to him in the form of golden trousers he may now proudly wear at public events. John now defers a part of his tax liability onto his

neighbors and fellow Escanabaites, Escanabarians, Escanabanders, whatever. Okay, maybe the trousers is a bit of an exaggeration, but essentially this is the effect if residents were doing what these Corporate Dark Stores are.

The Dark Store effect is already being seen locally and we are, quite frankly, behind on the effort to combat it. Please be sure to get informed and get active on this issue. Seek out myself or any committee member to get involved. You will be hearing more about our joint effort with other entities to promote a counter campaign called the B.R.I.T.E. store initiative. Stay tuned.

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*"Injustice boils in men's hearts as does steel in its cauldron, ready to pour forth, white hot, in the fullness of time"*  
*-Mother Jones*

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### Winter Apparel Donations

*Steve Benoit, President*

Our latest community project has begun. Thank you to Julie Rudden for the great idea and taking the lead on this initiative. We will be



collecting new or gently used winter jackets, gloves, scarves, hats and boots. They can be dropped off at the Union hall, the Union office at the mill, E1 winders (C crew), or E4 winders (D crew). Thank you in

advance for supporting our local community and continuing to be a Union that cares for others.



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## **OCTOBER'S SMALL BUSINESS FEATURE**

Our membership has a significant impact on the local economy. Let's keep that impact a positive one by shopping locally and being sure to frequent establishments that give back to our community. We'll be featuring a local small business each month that gives back to the community and is locally owned. Remember to let them know you saw them in our newsletter!

U.P. PC Repair opened approximately 3 years ago and specializes in cellphone screen replacement, all kinds of computer support including clean-up, virus removal, hardware replacement, data backup, websites, and much more! They even make house calls to fulfill the convenience needs of their customers. Next time you need support for your electronic devices, remember to keep it local by calling (906) 553-1995 or visiting them at 1320 Ludington St. next to Ernie's Irish Pub. Check out their Fall Clean Up Special for October!



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### **Thank you**

*Ross Strand, Worker's Comp Advocate*

Hi all, I want to take a minute to thank some local businesses for their support and community service: Body Mechanix, thank you Rachele and their staff for all the great work you do for us, and everyone in this community. Ernie's Irish Pub for your support and community service, anytime there's something going on, these guys get involved. Todd and staff at Upcars.com for your support and community service, these guys take on the downtown clean up every year, pretty much on their own dime. Michigan Law, for your support with us. Thanks to all for everything you do, most of the time things like this go unnoticed so I'd like to

personally thank them all, USW Local 2-21 will be sponsoring and getting members involved with Upcars.com for the downtown clean up, we will be looking for volunteers when the time comes, looking forward to this event.

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### **Fight or Flight?**

*Brandon Stromberg, Secretary/Next Gen/Rapid Response*

Moving is terrible. It is a long, slow, and boring process that takes an enormous amount of time, energy, and money. I didn't have all the right tools. I scuffed up too much furniture. Every limb on my body is bruised. I discovered the fridge was not included in our new house after signing the agreement. As I was driving down the road, my daughters' mattresses flew off the trailer (which really sucked because I didn't notice it for 45 minutes). The swing set was too heavy to carry myself. I think I am forgetting something . . . Oh yes, I put a box in the garage, turned around, and found my 3-year-old (pants down) urinating in the front driveway.

In very challenging situations, we have two options; fight or flight. Fight through adversity, or run from it. I didn't have all the right tools, but someone was there to borrow me the right ones. I scuffed up too much furniture, but I have the paint to fix it. Every limb on my body is bruised, but my wife told me I was "really strong" (roughly ten times). I found out the fridge was not included in the new house, but the store had great Labor Day sales. I lost my daughters' mattresses, but my amazing in-laws helped me find them. The swing set was too heavy, but my new neighbors helped me carry it. My 3-year-old urinated in front of our house, but, after she walked away from the puddle and pulled up her pants, said, "Daddy, I love you," which made everything better. My point is that all of us are going to have challenging situations in front of us and how we decide to react in those situations shapes us for the rest of our lives. We will create bonds with individuals who we may never expect and those bonds will last a lifetime. Support your committee. Support your union.



