

LOCAL 1321
DISTRICT COUNCIL 37
AFSCME, AFL-CIO



Bookshelf



JAN-MARCH 2022

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JOHN HYSLOP PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

2021, already four months gone, was an extremely disappointing year for many of us. With hopes of a vaccine, many thought we could start returning to normal activities. Then we had two variants that disrupted our plans. Truly, this was an extremely challenging year for all to navigate. Throughout, your Local and DC 37 were with you, protecting our benefits and jobs, and ensuring the Library keeps us safe in our workplace.

2022, as the pandemic recedes, hopefully to a less tragic disease, your Local and DC 37 will fight for higher wages, a working conditions contract that uplifts our work lives, policies and procedures that make our work lives safer, legislation that adequately protects our benefits and workplace health and safety, budgets that will help us grow, and we will advocate for our members with the strength and determination we have always done.

As you will read, this newsletter details the Local's efforts to achieve our 2022 goals, fighting for each and every union

member. In the DC 37's PEP talk magazine, you can read the amazing work DC 37 is doing on our behalf at the city and state levels.

At the Nov. 2021, DC 37 Delegates meeting, I was re-elected for a second term as the DC 37 Secretary. In this important job, I am responsible for providing accurate and thorough documentation of DC 37's meetings. This role also gives our local community a prominence at DC 37 that will have a positive impact on us. I am extremely humbled and honored that my fellow DC 37 Delegates entrusted me with this honor. I am also proud to join my fellow DC 37 Executive Board members who have been instrumental in a resurgent DC 37 on the City and State stage.

Whether as DC 37 or Local 1321, your union will fight for each and every one.

DC 37 Brooklyn Dental Center Closed Tuesday, March 1

The DC 37 Brooklyn Dental Center at 186 Joralemon St. closed on Tuesday, March 1. All dental services will continue from the DC 37 Dental Center, at 115 Chambers St. in lower Manhattan. The newly remodeled DC 37 Dental Center, with state-of-the-art technology and advanced dental and periodontal care, will provide members, retirees, and dependents their full-service dental needs. For more information on the DC 37 Dental Center, or to make an appointment, please call **212.766.4440**.

AFSCME Free College

The AFSCME free, four-year college program has been extended for good. This can be combined with the Free College program under which AFSCME members and their immediate families can earn Associate Degrees for free. This means members of the AFSCME family can go to college for free from anywhere in the country. All that's needed is a computer and an internet connection. For more information, visit: freecollege.afscme.org/



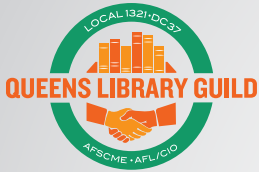


Reiterate Our Stands Against HATE

Last year we published two statements condemning the hateful attacks against Jews and people of Asian descent. We are horrified and saddened by these acts of violence and condemn them in the strongest of terms. We may not have experienced these physical attacks directly but we may know someone who has or we have the fear of being a victim. No one should fear being attacked for just walking outside their home, but that is what is happening.

Queens Library Guild, Local 1321 is committed to the safety and well-being of everyone. We are including the two statements we published last year in this newsletter to remind all of us that we care for our fellow citizens.

See page 4 for official statements





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*This is a private Facebook group for members only
 and requires sending a request to be admitted*

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- Executive Vice President Margaret Gibson
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- Treasurer Chinyu Lin
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- Vice President for Clericals Roma Ramdhan
- Clerical Representative Barbara Holloway
- Vice President for Blue Collar Thomas Wynn
- Blue Collar Representative Andrew Barfield
- Vice President for Non-Librarian
 Professional & Technical Employees Kyle Douglas

Queens Library Guild Local 1321 Official Statements Against Violence, Hatred & Racism

Queens Library Guild, Local 1321, DC 37, AFSCME, AFL/CIO condemns the recent attacks against Jewish people in New York City - vandalized synagogues; vandalized restaurants and storefronts; physical and verbal assaults of Jewish people. These attacks are not isolated incidents but are happening in towns and cities across our country, and continue thousands of years of this type of hatred against Jewish people. We are deeply disturbed by all these verbal and physical attacks and very concerned that they are increasing.

The increase in violent attacks are a painful reminder that hatred, bigotry, and racism is ever present and not isolated to one group of people. Last year the Local put out a newsletter in the aftermath of the George Floyd murder, bringing to light our co-workers' concerns and fears of police violence and racism against people of color. This past spring we condemned the violence against Asians. Now, this statement condemns attacks against Jewish people. Tragically, the violence against these groups continues. Asians are targeted with violence daily for no other reason than how they look. African-Americans continue to be targeted by law enforcement. And people are attacked for their religious beliefs. Your union will call out hate every time it occurs.

This violence directed towards groups of people based on how they look; how they dress; their gender identity; how they practice their religion; who they love; who they are as humans is abhorrent. Please join all the members of Queens Library Guild, Local 1321 in rejecting and condemning all hate. We unequivocally support a richly diverse city where all peoples should be free from fear no matter who they are.

Queens Library Guild Local 1321

cc: Queens Library Guild membership

Queens Library Guild Local 1321 Stop the Violence Toward Asians

The members of Queens Library Guild, Local 1321, DC 37, AFSCME, AFL/CIO condemn the verbal and physical violence toward Asians in our community, including our own coworkers and customers. We also condemn all forms of racism without equivocation. It must stop.

Asians have experienced verbal and physical attacks, and racism in our country for years. However, since the pandemic hit our shores, these attacks have risen exponentially and citizens of Asian descent have become afraid. The most vulnerable, the elderly, were pushed, beaten, spit on, verbally abused, and murdered. Others have been stabbed, tormented in their homes, and called racial epithets in public.

Our Queens Library is composed of people from all walks of life and are representative of the community we work in. We are constantly working towards a library that is a safe, open, and welcoming space for colleagues and everyone who walks through our doors or accesses our services remotely. As members of our union we are also striving for equality and understanding. In all we do as a Union for our diverse membership, we have stood for civil rights, fair treatment, and respect for all. We will continue to stand up to this racism and will not tolerate any attacks or discrimination towards our Asian colleagues, their families and friends and our community. Queens Library Guild, Local 1321 is committed to our values of equality and acceptance for everyone and ending racism in all its forms.



2021 Year in Review

2021 was another tragic and challenging pandemic year, and yet through all of it, your union protected your job and your benefits.

At the end of 2020 and beginning of 2021 New York City's finances were in dire straits. If it were not for the City's unions voluntarily postponing the City's contributions to our benefits funds, the Mayor would have laid off 90,000 city employees in FY 2021, including library employees. With the prospect of a dire financial situation for FY 2022, the Mayor threatened budget cuts that could cause layoffs. That all changed when we elected Joe Biden with the help of AFSCME and the AFL/CIO. Within months of being elected, Congress passed and President Biden signed the American Recovery Act. That legislation gave all local governments, including New York City, the necessary funds to get through the pandemic and avert proposed cuts. The City's economy recovered so well that they started paying the postponed contributions earlier than expected.

In the winter and spring, the Local, along with the three other library locals and DC 37, advocated with our elected officials to ensure New York City's public libraries were properly funded. We spoke with the Mayor's, and Speaker's office, the Chair of the Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations Chair; to ensure that libraries had the necessary funding to increase services and hire to fill all vacancies. Our efforts were so successful that no full-time union staff were laid off and in fact, we were given enough money to start hiring to fill the vacancies caused by people who either retired or otherwise left the system.

During the fall 2021, Local 1321 introduced to the Administration its demand for a Customer Code of Conduct policy and procedures. The staff need a policy that clearly states abusive, discriminatory, and customer behavior and actions are prohibited. The Library also needs a clear process, and procedures that guides, encourages, and supports everyone in the system during these traumatic situations.

After delaying the negotiation of a new working conditions contract, the Local's Negotiating Team solicited demands from the members. In the fall 2021, the Local's Negotiating Team, composed of the Local's Executive Board members, presented its demands.

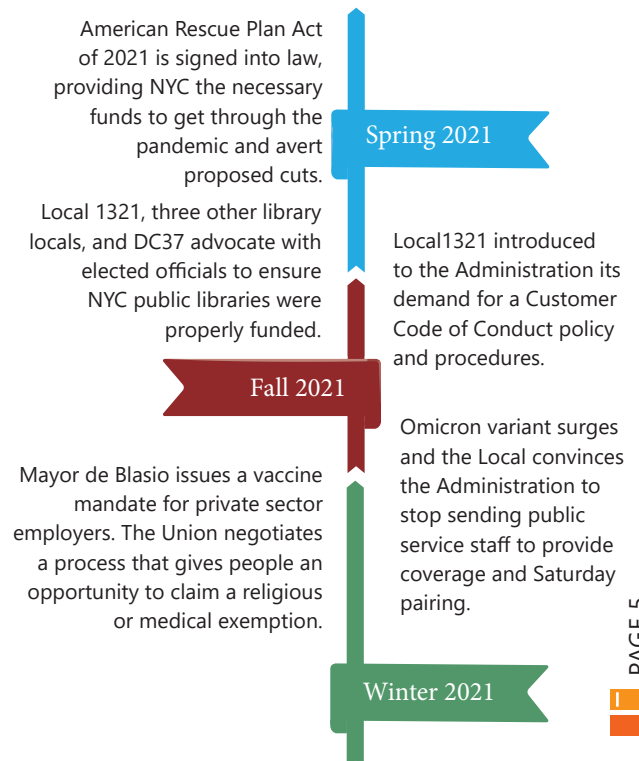
As COVID cases waned, the Library started providing more services Everyone was cautiously optimistic. Then the Omicron surge happened. The Administration scaled back services but not sufficiently or quickly enough. The Local convinced them to stop sending public service staff to provide coverage and to stop Saturday pairing. We also convinced them, by filing a grievance, to stop opening to the public when the branch did not have enough staff.

In the winter, Mayor de Blasio issued a vaccine mandate for private sector employers including the three library systems. The Union was able to negotiate

a process that gave people an opportunity to claim a religious or medical exemption or get vaccinated by Jan. 26. Without our union, the Administration would be forced to fire everyone who was unvaccinated on Dec. 27, 2022.

During the year, our DC 37 Representative Leo Morris and I visited every location in the system, sometimes multiple times to obtain members' personal email addresses so that the Local can communicate more efficiently with them. We also discussed branches' specific issues and tried to help resolve them.

Your union is always looking out for its members. Our vigilance forces the Administration to honor our contracts and policy and procedures. Our relationships with our elected officials and the Administration ensures we can accomplish many things to make our work lives better. Our commitment to you has ensured that no one lost a day's pay throughout this chaotic, tragic, and some of the most difficult times of our lives. We still have a lot of work to do and we will always continue fighting.



Surge Strategies

Plan of Action & Communication

The following was sent as an email blast in February to the membership:

On Feb. 1, 2022, Margaret Gibson, Ann Marie Josephs, Thomas Wynn, Chante Gaines, Leo Morris (our DC 37 Representative), Moira Dolan (our DC 37 Negotiator), and President John Hyslop met with the Administration to express the members' concerns about the current COVID wave, ideas to adjust our customer service during the wave, and how to improve communication.

On Jan. 21, 2022 we sent the following to the Administration:

"The Administration should create a standard reporting form that includes as much information as possible, including.

- When did the Administration learn of the positive results?
- Where did the person work?
- List affected staff who were in close contact.
- List everyone Safety and Health needs to notify.
- List when, where, what, and how the location was cleaned. (Custodians will clean the location the day it reopens and before staff report to the site)
- The date affected staff members need to get tested.
- The expected date of return, with the caveat that they should not return until they are notified by their respective Department head or their designee of the exact date.
- If a location is kept open:
 - Location staff need to be notified with the above information;
 - Location staff should follow instructions received directly from the Administration and not from the generic "AllUser" email;
 - The Administration's explanation for keeping the location open;
 - Someone from Safety and Health must visit the location to explain the situation.

The Administration should send the form to all of the affected staff members, including the staff member(s) who is sick, and their respective Department Heads or their designee, as soon as possible after learning of the case. To ensure everyone gets this vital information we propose the following:

- Create a checklist of staff who need to be notified.
- Email to their work email the form to the affected staff and respective Department heads and their designees.

- Contact affected staff by text and telephone with an automated message stating they have been exposed and to check their work email or contact Safety and Health.
- Safety and Health will work with managers to ensure everyone is contacted.

A pandemic needs transparent and accurate information. We believe that this would go a long way in doing that."

Ann Marie, Margaret, Chante, Thomas, Leo, and John gave compelling examples of how miscommunication caused a lot of confusion and anxiety during the recent surge. Creating an holistic communication process would go a long way to help reassure staff and manage the very chaotic situation COVID surges create.

We also expressed a need for the library to redo their emergency operational plan given our new knowledge and experience with COVID. This is not April 2020 — we have vaccines; we have PPE; we have enforcement protocols. However, we do not have a plan that can be implemented quickly when a surge happens. At the beginning of the Omicron surge, the Administration was caught off guard, and they only implemented changes after Margaret and John offered suggestions. We stressed that staff need a new written emergency customer service model that everyone follows when we have another surge.

The Administration said they heard us. We will continue to push for these changes so that the next time we have a surge or pandemic, the Library has a coherent plan of action.





Dues

In a letter dated Oct. 20, 2021, AFSCME's Secretary-Treasurer Elissa McBride informed AFSCME's District Councils and Locals that effective Jan. 1, 2022, membership dues will increase by \$0.95 per month. Since we are paid bi-weekly the total per paycheck will be \$0.45. At Local 1321's Dec. 2021 Executive Board meeting, the Executive Board voted to delay the increase for the members to June 1, 2022. Contact Local 1321 President, John Hyslop, for a copy of the AFSCME dues increase letter.

AFSCME's constitution Article IX Subordinate Bodies, found at bit.ly/3rloWp9, explains how dues increases are calculated.

Section 6 of Article IX determines if an increase should go into effect.

"The dues of each local union shall be adjusted annually in accordance with the average percentage increase in pay of AFSCME members..." If AFSCME's members did not get an increase in the 12-month period ending July 1, then dues will not be increased in the coming calendar year. If AFSCME members did get an increase in that 12-month period, then dues will be increased.

Section 7 of the same article explains how the increase is computed.

"Each subordinate body shall submit a copy of any collective bargaining agreements, memoranda of understanding or other agreements affecting the wages of its members to the International Secretary-Treasurer within thirty days after their ratification...From the above document and reports, the International Secretary-Treasurer shall determine, by Sept. 30 of each year, the average percentage increase in pay received by AFSCME's members...Upon completion of this calculation, the International Secretary-Treasurer shall cause it to be audited by an independent certified public accountant not otherwise connected with AFSCME...Such audit shall certify the accuracy of the International Secretary-Treasurer's calculation...Upon receipt of such certification, the International Secretary-Treasurer shall notify the International Executive Board and each subordinate body of the resulting adjustment in dues and per capita tax required to be implemented..."

The audited calculation of all AFSCME members' pay increases during a 12-month period ending July 1, 2021, equates to \$0.95 per month and a \$0.45 per paycheck dues increase for Local 1321's members.

Throughout the decades, AFSCME, DC 37, and Local 1321 have collectively bargained for free health insurance, salary increases, an amazing array of benefits, pensions, and more. As unionized library workers, sometimes we forget the struggles of previous generations — no health insurance, abysmal pay, very little benefits, arbitrary library rules. More than 50 years ago, when our fellow library workers formed Local 1321, they fought for and won us health insurance, consistent library rules, DC 37 benefits, consistent pay and more. More recently, Local 1321 stopped the library from contracting our security and custodial services; brought back 44 staff who were laid off; negotiated a working conditions contract that improved our previous one; advocated that no staff get laid off during this pandemic crisis.

Workers from around the world have recognized our value and are taking action. Non-union workers from around our country are attempting to unionize at levels we have not seen in years. Union workers are taking job actions we have not seen in years. Unions are actively participating in the Federal funding legislation so that it benefits all its citizens. Unions are fighting for city funding so that no city worker loses their job through budget cuts.

Our fight to maintain our hard-won gains are constant. Currently, right-wing groups are actively working to take away your ability to preserve and negotiate your medical insurance, pensions, salaries, and other benefits. In Wisconsin public sector workers whose rights to organize and bargain collectively were stripped. They have lost their health insurance, had their pay cut, and experienced wholesale layoffs. That, could be our future if we do not fund our union.

As a reminder, these are some of the ways our dues sustain our union:

- DC 37 representatives advocate for our members and file grievances on our behalf;
- DC 37 Negotiators negotiate new contracts with the City and Library;
- DC 37 lawyers file and argue arbitrations; and file lawsuits against the city and anti-union organizations;
- AFSCME lawyers fight anti-union lawsuits in all 50 states including Washington and New York;
- The DC 37 Help our Own Fund and Personal Services Unit staff help us in times of financial and emotional need;
- AFSCME and DC 37 Political Action staff advocate on our behalf to ensure libraries are funded; and other local issues affecting government workers;
- The Local's telephones so members can keep in contact with their representatives and;
- The Local's newsletter and other communication tools.

Customer Code of Conduct

Local 1321 continues to push for a more forceful Customer Code of Conduct policy, and to create a policy that guides everyone. We sent the enclosed letter in October and have repeatedly asked to bring together frontline and administration staff to create a new process and procedures that will take into account practical solutions. We appreciate that this pandemic and everything surrounding it diverts everyone's attention, but staff continue to have problematic customer interactions and we still do not have clear guidance.

A glaring and tragic example of this need is what happened in Long Island City in early February. Long Island City has a crisis that has been brewing for nearly two years, highlighted by a very violent and disturbing incident on Feb. 8, 2022. A customer became extremely belligerent and violent. We commend the staff for their bravery, presence of mind, and teamwork to protect themselves and their customers. The Children's Librarian escorted the children and parents out the backdoor when they realized the customer was becoming violent. After

being trapped by the violent customer, the Representative and Specialist worked together to escort him out of the branch. The CLM immediately called 911 and came to assist.

Leo Morris, our DC 37 Representative and I visited the branch on Feb. 10 to meet with the staff to understand what happened and to formulate a response to the Administration that conveys their feelings, concerns, and recommendations to remedy their situation. We also went to reassure them that their union will support them and do whatever is in our power to make Long Island City a safe and welcoming branch for everyone.

The Long Island City incident is one of many our branch staff encounter. A Customer Code of Conduct policy and procedures will not prevent them but they would give staff the tools to report and impose consequences. It will also provide reassurances that their employer is listening and cares. The Local will continue to push the Administration on this.

2022 Trustees' Report

Feb. 16, 2022

To whom it may concern:

We reviewed Local 1321's bookkeeping practices over Zoom on January 24, 2022. The trustees discussed the audit and practices with John Hyslop, the Local's President, and found no discrepancies. The meeting was conducted virtually this year on account of the pandemic.

Respectfully submitted,

Edith Batchler

Sharla Emery

Mike Wong

Trustees

Local 1321, Queens Library Guild

Dennis Walcott, President/CEO
Queens Library
89-11 Merrick Boulevard
Jamaica, New York 11432

October 15, 2021

Dear Dennis,

I write regarding the sexual harassment, intimidation, abuse, and violence that Queens Public Library staff encounter on a regular basis. The members of Queens Library Guild, Local 1321, appreciate the Board of Trustees' time and efforts in recently updating the Library's Public Conduct Policy and interest in helping to create a safe and comfortable environment for customers and staff. However, the Public Conduct Policy needs to be amended further to properly address the offensive and often illegal behavior that staff confront daily. We also reiterate our request that the Library establish formal procedures for enforcing this critical policy and for reporting and addressing such offensive incidents against staff.

As I am sure you are aware, it has been widely reported and acknowledged that the number of harassing and violent incidents against library employees has increased significantly over the last few years, including during the current pandemic. These incidents are often directed at an employee's race, gender, age and sexual orientation and include sexual harassment, stalking, improper physical contact and intimidation. Any employer's failure to promptly investigate and address such incidents raises employee anxiety, impacts morale negatively and lowers productivity. The prevalence of these incidents and deleterious impact they have on staff underscore the need for a clear and comprehensive public conduct policy and detailed written procedures implementing it.

Many of the types of improper and often illegal acts committed against staff are not explicitly referenced in the current policy. Moreover, a policy can only go so far without a set of clear and comprehensive procedures to implement and enforce it. In this regard, the Library does not have any written procedures in place for staff to follow when they encounter violations of the Public Conduct Policy. Nor do supervisors and administrators have established guidelines for responding to incidents. There is also a critical need for a training component to supplement the Policy and accompanying procedures and ensure that staff is equipped with the knowledge and tools needed to respond to the myriad of incidents they routinely encounter.

We recognize that amending the Public Conduct Policy and establishing written procedures will not be a panacea to inappropriate and even illegal customer behavior. However, there can be no doubt that through implementation of these measures, staff will know that they are being supported in this extremely critical matter.

This is a great opportunity to significantly impact the day-to-day lives of staff. We look forward to working with the Library to make this happen.

Sincerely,

John Hyslop, President
Queens Library Guild, Local 1321
cc: Queens Library Guild membership

Benevolence Policy

Queens Library Guild Local 1321 provides a benevolence of \$50 to members for the following:

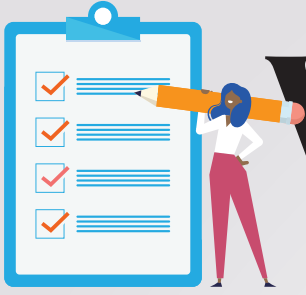
Illness, if member is out 10 days | Marriage | New Baby | Bereavement for spouse, parent, parents-in-law, child, sibling, or a family member who is part of member's household

Contact a Local 1321 representative if you or a colleague are entitled to this benevolence.

Queens Library Guild, Local 1321

District Council 37, AFSCME, AFL-CIO

www.local1321.org | 718.779.0787 (p) | 718.779.0788 (f) | twitter: @local132



Working Condition Contract Negotiations

As mentioned at the November 2021 General Membership Meeting, on Nov. 16, 2021, the Local's Negotiating Team composed of the Local's Executive Board and our DC 37 Negotiator met with the Administration to begin negotiating the Local's contract. We agreed to schedule more negotiating sessions in December but then the pandemic surged and the Mayor imposed a vaccine mandate, occupying everyone's time. We will keep you abreast of any changes that take place.

The working condition's contract, found here www.local1321.org and the Library's staff page, expired on December 31, 2020. However, the Local and Administration agreed to extend its terms and conditions because of the pandemic.

The demands the Team presented, included here, were compiled throughout the first part of 2021 and approved by the membership at the September 2021 General Membership meeting. Local 1321 members created them in response to the issues that negatively impact their work and livelihood. The demands provide meaningful solutions that will positively impact Queens Library workers. Our hope is that the Administration understands the value of the demands and agrees with them.

Collective Bargaining Demands for the Successor Contract between Queens Library Guild, Local 1321, DC 37 AFSCME and Queens Public Library

1. Article II

Recognition

Upgrade Customer Service Supervisor, Representative, and Specialist positions.

2. Article IV

- a. Section 2: The employer shall maintain at least a minimum staffing level at branches as outlined below, excluding Central and Flushing.
 - 1 floor agency - 2 full-time staff plus one full-time person in charge
 - 2 floor agency - 4 full-time staff plus one full-time person in charge
 - 3 floor agency - 6 full-time staff plus one full-time person in charge
 - 4 floor agency - 8 full-time staff plus one full-time person in charge
 - etc.

- b. Section 7: The day after Thanksgiving shall be added as a holiday.
- c. Section 7. c: Eliminate this clause (moot has to do with a one-year period that has elapsed)
- d. New Section 20: In the event of a system-wide closing, employees should not be charged their leaves if they were on scheduled or approved annual, sick, or any other authorized leave.
- e. New Section 21: The Floating Team shall receive a differential.
- f. New Section 22: The Library shall offer automatic payroll deduction to a 529 account and to AFSCME's PEOPLE program.

3. Article V

- a. One hour after any employee comes in and the temperature and relative humidity is over the threshold, all staff shall receive compensatory time.
- b. Remove relative humidity as criteria for the temperature threshold.
- c. Lower the heat threshold to 80 and increase the cold threshold to 65.

4. Article VIII

Section 1: Housekeeping. Add language to this section to follow the practice of covering almost all library employees.

5. Article IX

Extend bereavement leave to five days

6. Article XVI

Section 5

- a. The Employer shall maintain updated standards for all classifications as necessary.
- b. Update performance reviews.

7. Article XVI

- a. Section 6: Travel Reimbursement for Temporary Assignment In the event that staff are temporarily relocated to another branch because their home branch will be closed for more than two weeks or they are placed on an involuntary transfer, they shall be reimbursed for travel expenses of a roundtrip via bus or subway if their normal commute is less than that roundtrip.

South Jamaica Grievance

- b. New Section 9: Employees shall be permitted to have a non-alcoholic beverage at a public service desk in a secure container with a lid.
- c. New Section 10: Every branch shall have disposable gloves, disinfectant wipes, antibacterial hand sanitizer and face masks available to staff at all times.
- d. New Section 11: There shall be water coolers in each branch.
- e. New Section 12: The employer shall offer financial assistance up to \$2,000 per calendar year for qualified child care.
- f. New Section 13: Negotiated work from home policy.
- g. New Section 14: Staff who use more than one language to perform library work shall be paid a differential.
- h. New Section 15: When scheduling annual leave for the week, Monday-Friday, staff will be given the preceding and proceeding Saturdays.
- i. New Section 16: Any employee who works out of title for six months or longer and who then interviews and is officially promoted into the position that they were doing, the Library will consider this period their probationary period and give their probationary review.
- j. New Section 17: If a location suffers a traumatic event, e.g. violent crime, the location should be closed to the public for at least one day.

8. Citywide Article V

- a. Section 5: Modify this section to match the Library's policy and New York City law.
- b. Section 5e: For those who generously donated sick leave and in the spirit of helping our colleagues, the donated sick leave shall be counted toward the waiver of sick leave documentation.
- c. Section 9a: Add Juneteenth — June 19.

9. Schedule A10

Housekeeping adds the Lead Instructor to the letter. Remove language that makes Rochdale Village and Peninsula Center Manager IIs to make all Center Managers, Center Manager IIIs.

- 10. The term of the agreement shall be for four years 1/1/ 21 to 12/31/24.

Dec. 29, 2021, during the chaos of the Omicron surge, South Jamaica's Customer Service Representative and Customer Service Supervisor started their day. Realizing that they would be the only ones there because of COVID-induced staff shortages, they contacted the Administration to find out what to do. The Administration told them to open the branch. Respecting this order, they opened the branch. Fairly early on in the day, they had difficult customers with one getting completely out of hand, leaving the staff shaken, upset, and ill-at-ease. Eventually the Administration decided to close the branch.

The staff contacted the union. We immediately contacted the Administration condemning their decision to open the branch with two staff and without a librarian who could be designated as being in charge. The next day, the Administration started closing branches either to the public or completely as more and more staff called out or were exposed to the virus.

The Local's leadership, on behalf of the South Jamaica staff, filed a grievance stating that the Administration violated a 2017 Stipulation of Settlement that states a Senior Librarian is in charge when the CLM and ACLM are absent. The settlement was created after a group of Customer Service Supervisors grieved the Administration's order that they would be the person in charge of a location when the CLM or ACLM are absent. The Administration admitted their mistake at South Jamaica and settled the grievance.

The Local is deeply disturbed by what happened at South Jamaica and highlights our contract demand for an adequate staffing level and demand for a Customer Code of Conduct policy and procedures. We hope that the Administration listens to its employees.





Our Resilient Library Workers

As if coming from nowhere, the third wave of the coronavirus arrived.

Beginning in mid-November and continuing into the new year, the Omicron variant of COVID-19 struck New York City. At its height in December and January, the city saw conditions somewhat reminiscent of the 2020 lockdown. Streets were quiet, and restaurants and stores were nearly empty while New Yorkers lined up throughout the five boroughs at COVID-19 testing centers and vaccination sites.

The Omicron wave of COVID-19, though not as deadly as the initial wave and the Delta variant over the summer, spread quickly throughout the city, wreaking havoc on an already wounded city, and impacted city services, particularly those that directly serve the public, such as the city's three public library systems.

In Queens alone, staffing shortages due to Omicron forced the Queens Public Library system to close 11 branches on Dec. 27.

"This variant has been really disruptive. So many of our members have been sick or exposed, and we've had to shut down branches," said Queens Library Guild Local 1321 President John Hyslop.

Hyslop, who also serves as DC 37's Secretary, described Omicron's impact on his members particularly in the first few weeks of the outbreak.

"It's been very stressful, with a lot of anxiety and disruption. Since mid-December, it's been chaotic, and testing has been brutal for everybody," Hyslop said. "Like everyone else, we've been going out, standing in lines to be tested, sometimes for hours."

COVID crisis communication between management and library workers has been imperfect at best. With 80% to 90% of the Queens Library staff now working in-person, Hyslop said Omicron's impact is making life more difficult now than in 2020 when more staff were remote.

In March 2020 when COVID first appeared, the Queens Library Administration developed a written operations plan. As the virus progressed and the vaccine emerged, the Administration did not adjust its rules and did not maintain written guidance, all of which has led to a chaotic approach to handling this last surge.

"This latest variant created a lot of questions about what to do about branch openings, when to get tested, who gets tested, why branches remained open. It was chaotic," Hyslop

said. "Margaret Gibson, [the Local's Executive Vice President] and I repeatedly told the administration that we need written guidance and the Library staff making decisions on how to operate the library during this pandemic need to come out and explain these decisions to us. Sometimes the decisions are very nuanced, and members are angry about their decisions. Every public service staff member asks, 'Why do I have to come in? If we've been exposed, how are we safe?' They need someone to come out and explain why," Hyslop said.

The uneven application of rules definitely had an impact on at least one branch.

"We had a serious situation in the last week of December where management tried to keep a branch in South Jamaica open with two clerical staffers, which violated a settlement agreement. So Leo Morris, the DC 37 rep, our Executive Vice President Margaret Gibson, and I immediately filed a grievance and won," Hyslop said.

As soon as the grievance was filed, Queens Library management closed branches outright or to the public when they did not have enough staff. However, Hyslop did give credit to the Queens Library administration during the crisis.

"We want a safe, consistent work environment where our members know that we are as protected as possible and can still help our Queens communities. I give credit to our administration. In March 2020, they shut the system down, started buying PPE, created written service models that kept staff safe, instituted and enforced social distancing guidelines, were very generous with COVID-related time off, and other things. However, this latest surge caught the Administration unprepared. Our members need new rules of operation and communication," he said.

To that end, the Union and Administration held a labor-management meeting Feb. 1, so the Union could stress to the Administration the need to create a plan for future emergencies and to share their ideas on how the Library staff can best continue providing excellent services and keep staff safe with improved communication.

Reprinted from DC 37 PEP Talk, Jan-March 2022

FY 2023 Budget Process



Our FY 2023 budget season started Feb. 16 when Mayor Adams issued his preliminary budget. The Mayor proposed an amount that is higher than FY 2022's preliminary budget, but less than the money we actually received for last fiscal year. Now, we have to advocate with the Mayor and City Council to ensure they agree on a final budget that allows us to continue providing our excellent services.

New York City's budget process requires an explanation. Early in the calendar year, the Mayor announces the preliminary budget. The City Council holds hearings about it. In mid- to late-April, after the City has a better understanding of its current financial situation, the Mayor presents the Mayor's budget. The City Council holds more hearings. In late May through early June, the City Council and Mayor negotiate a budget and issue a final one before July 1.

During this time, interested parties will advocate for their share of the budget. For libraries, the three library systems' staff, DC 37's Political Action Department staff, and the four library unions will advocate to ensure our libraries are funded. We work together for our common goal — obtaining the necessary funds our library staff and customers deserve.

This year is no different. The Local's leadership is in communication with DC 37 to create a strategy. Our Executive Vice President Margaret Gibson, a staff member from a branch in each Queens council district, and President John Hyslop will meet with the Queens City Council members, many of whom are new. We will testify at City Council hearings. DC 37 will ensure all the City Council members know how important libraries are to DC 37. All of this is done so we can protect our jobs, continue to hire more staff, and have the resources to provide our services.

Thank you to all who volunteered to meet with the City Council members.



2022

Scholarships & Book Award



Local 1321 is again offering two scholarships and one book award to its members' children to provide financial assistance towards higher education. Furthering one's education provides an amazing array of benefits. However, the cost of higher education can make achieving that goal difficult, if not impossible. Local 1321 members recognize the challenges and are pleased to offer one \$2,500 scholarship to be awarded to one undergraduate; one \$2,500 scholarship to be awarded to one graduate; and one \$500 Kane Noel Memorial Book Award that will be awarded to the undergraduate with the second highest score. The scholarships and book award are open to members' children who demonstrate high achievement in academics, community service, and have good moral character.

TO QUALIFY, THE APPLICANT MUST BE:

- Child/children of Queens Library Guild, Local 1321 member;
- Currently enrolled in a two or four-year college, university, or vocational-technical school accredited by a "nationally recognized" accreditor (or, for certain vocational institutions, approved by a recognized state approval agency). To check if your school is accredited, see www.ed.gov/accreditation?src=rrn;
- Have a minimum grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, or equivalent;
- And has not been a previous recipient of a Local 1321 Scholarship.

APPLICANTS MUST PROVIDE:

- Official high school transcript and/or current college transcript including all completed coursework;
- For recent high school or college graduates, a copy of acceptance letter from an accredited school;
- Two **personal, educational or professional** letters of recommendations, documenting the applicant's character, professional and/or academic strengths (no family members are allowed to write recommendations);
- 1,000 word essay answering the question, "Why do you think you deserve this scholarship?" Please include in your essay:

Community involvement,
Journey to college, academic work, and
Future goals.

Local 1321's Scholarship Committee members will conduct a blind-review of the applications.

If you have any questions, please call 718-779-0787 or email local1321@gmail.com. We look forward to awarding these scholarships and making higher education more attainable for Local 1321 members' children.

The requested documents must be submitted by June 19, 2022 using the online form, <https://tinyurl.com/1321scholarship>, or mailed in one packet, including the enclosed form, to:

Queens Library Guild/Local 1321 Scholarship Committee
District Council 37
54-22 Skillman Ave.
Woodside, NY 11377



Queens Library Guild/Local 1321 Scholarship Application Form

PLEASE PRINT + MAKE SURE ALL ANSWERS ARE LEGIBLE

Have you received a Local 1321 Scholarship before? Yes _____ No _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email address: _____

Are you a child of a Queens Library Guild, Local 1321 member? Yes _____ No _____

Name of the Local 1321 member related to you: _____

Local 1321 member relation to you: _____

Contact number of the Local 1321 member that is related to you: _____

Work email address of the Local 1321 member that is related to you: _____

Queens Library location of the Local 1321 member that is related to you: _____

Are you currently enrolled in a two or four-year college, university, or vocation-technical school accredited by a "nationally recognized" accreditor (or, for certain vocational institutions, approved by a recognized state approval agency)? To check if your school is accredited, see

<https://www.ed.gov/accreditation?src=rn> Yes _____ No _____

Do you have a minimum grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, or equivalent?

Yes _____ No _____

This application must also include:

- 1,000 word essay answering the question "Why do you think you deserve this scholarship?" Please include in your essay: your community involvement, your journey to college, academic work, and your future goals;
- An acceptance letter;
- Two letters of recommendation (personal, educational, or professional) documenting your character, professional, and/or academic strengths (letters of recommendation from family members will not be accepted).
- An official high school and/or college transcript including all completed coursework.

Queens Library Guild, LOCAL 1321

DC 37, AFSCME, AFL-CIO
125 Barclay Street
New York, NY 10007

New Federal Law

Protects Against Surprise Medical Bills

There won't be any more surprise medical bills for patients with the new federal "No Surprises Act" that took effect Jan. 1, 2022. This law protects patients from the notorious "surprise medical bills" often received when medical care is provided by out-of-network hospitals, doctors, or other providers they did not choose.

These bills often pose financial burdens on consumers when health plans deny out-of-network claims or apply higher charges from out-of-network providers.

Non-emergency services, such as anesthesia, are often provided by out-of-network providers at in-network hospitals and facilities without the patient's knowledge. This has been a large problem for patients as doctors don't work for the hospital or participate in a consumer's health plan, which can result in the receipt of an unexpected bill.

Surprise medical bill protections apply to most emergency services provided in hospital emergency rooms, urgent care centers, and emergency and nonemergency air ambulance transportation.

Similar legislation already in effect in New York State only applies to insurance companies, while the new federal law covers insurance companies and self-insured employer-provided health plans. New York City employees covered by insured City health plans and New York State employees covered by the New York State Health Insurance Program are covered by the state law.

These laws require health plans to hold patients harmless by covering surprise out-of-network claims and only apply standard in-network copays, coinsurance, and deductibles.

Health plans and providers must negotiate the payment of surprise medical bills, and if unsuccessful, an independent dispute resolution process will determine the amount to be paid. This process should happen automatically between the out-of-network provider and the patient's health plan for any covered service without the patient knowing. However, if a patient does receive a surprise bill, they should immediately contact their plan.

Patients receiving any surprise medical bills should contact their health plan immediately.

