

THE LOCAL 34 BANNER



AFSCME Local 34 Hennepin County Social Services Unit

January 2015

Raises—and Dues Increases—Take Effect This Month

The second year of 2.5% wage increases takes effect in January, as does the new .25% dues increase, the Local approved in November. With the first steps towards negotiations beginning shortly, be aware of the wages, benefits and deductions that influence your bi-weekly take-home pay.

We'll use the practical—and fictitious—example of the Owly family, who all happen to work for Hennepin County—and belong to Local 34—to demonstrate.



Papa Wally is a long-time Hennepin County Social Worker, who promoted to being a Child Protection Social Worker in 2014. He was at Step 10 in December, earning \$35.72 per hour. His dues in December were \$28.58 per pay period.

With his raise in January, Wally will be earning \$36.61 per hour, and his new bi-weekly dues deduction will be \$36.61.

In April, Wally is due for his annual step increase, to the top step, 11, which will pay him \$38.55 an hour. His new dues deduction will increase to \$38.55.

Wally's wife Dolly is a County Public Health Nurse at the top of her job class, earning \$36.44 in December 2014, with dues of \$29.16 per pay period. In 2015, her new wage is \$37.36 per hour, and her dues will now be \$37.36.

Eldest daughter Molly is a Principal Child Support Officer, Step 5, as of December. She was earning \$20.49 an hour, with Local 34 dues of \$16.40 per check. In January, her new Step 5 wage is \$21.01 per hour and her dues rise to \$21.01. Molly is due for a Performance Review in October. At Step 6, she'll be earning \$22.14 an hour, and dues will be \$22.14.

Middle daughter Polly has been a Medical Assistant at

NorthPoint, at Step 3, earning \$15.34 an hour and paying dues of \$12.27 per check. Her increase in January will be for \$15.72 an hour, with dues of \$15.72.

But, Polly is transferring to HSPHD to be a CMA in early-January. She'll be at Step 1.5, which pays \$17.07 an hour, and her dues will go to \$17.07.

Holly, the youngest was hired as an HSR in 2012, and is at Step 4 in December, earning \$21.76 per hour, with dues of \$17.41. The negotiated raise brings her to \$22.31 an hour in January, with dues of \$22.31 per check.

Holly will get her Performance Review in February, and as an HSR, Step 5, she will earn \$23.74 per hour, with dues of \$23.74. But, Holly is working on promoting to HSR, Senior in the Spring. If she promotes, it will be to Step 8.0, where she'll be paid \$25.96 per hour, and her dues will increase to \$25.96.

Special points of interest:

- Council 5 is organizing a Day of Service in April to celebrate the life of Martin Luther King Jr.
- Minnesota's string of good economic news continued Dec. 4, with state economists projecting a budget surplus of \$1.037 billion.
- Anything you do on your work computer is subject to monitoring. The same applies to your phone, PDA and other devices.

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A Round of Negotiations is About to Get Started

Here is a brief refresher of how AFSCME negotiations work in Hennepin County.

Each of the seven AFSCME locals—34, 552, 1719, 2822, 2864, and both parts of 2938—combine together as the Hennepin Policy Committee to organize our negotiations, and both any potential

strike and the educational/action efforts during Negotiations.

Any member of 34 in good standing, may be part of the large "Master Committee" the next few months, developing our proposals for the next contract. From this group, each Local chooses a small number (usually 5-7 for Lo-

cal 34) to be on the "Table Team."

The Table Team meets face-to-face with Employer's representatives, and later through Mediators, to reach an agreement by November. The Master Committee then meets again, recommends acceptance or rejection of the offer.





Local 34 President
Jean Diederich,
photo taken 2009.

THE LOCAL 34 BANNER

President Diederich's Column: "If Jean Ran the World"

Hello and Happy 2015 to everyone. The holidays are behind us - hope that you all were able to enjoy spending some time with friends and family doing something to relax - even if it was only for a few hours. We all need time to rejuvenate.

2015 will be a busy year for us. Many of us are still making adjustments to our work - either how we do it or where we do it - and that is not going to let up as staff shift around with regionalization. Many of our long time co

-workers will be leaving us for the land of retirement. It will be hard to see them go as they have shared so much of their time and knowledge with us. We wish them well - they deserve reaching this goal. As they leave, we will welcome new coworkers stepping in to fill the positions and learn new names and stories. We will do a lot of sharing our wealth of knowledge as folks settle into new positions.

We have Local 34 officer elections in April, with nominations

in February and March. We have our 2015 AFSCME Council 5 Day on the Hill in March to meet our legislators and discuss issues important to us. We will also be keeping an eye on legislative actions at both the state and federal levels. Since laws, statutes and regulations coming from those bodies affects our daily work lives - and our pensions, our schools, our roads, etc., - it behooves us to stay informed on any proposals that would change things.

Do You Have What it Takes to Put Out a Local 34 Newsletter Each Month?

Editor Wes Volkenant recently informed the Local 34 E-Board that he intends to step down as Editor sometime in 2015. He would be pleased to help Mentor an interested member or members in how to put together one of these issues.

If this sounds like you, e-mail Wes or President Diederich to express your interest!

It Is in Giving that We Receive

... Local 2440's efforts are just the latest example of the generosity and community involvement of AFSCME locals and members. We take part in big projects, such as raising thousands of dollars each year for Council 5's Veterans Initiative. We take part in small, individual efforts, such as coaching local sports teams, volunteering at church, or donating blood.

Some of us may be called to attend state committee meetings to testify about our work. We also have negotiations coming up as our contract expires at the end of this year. We put a lot of time and effort into making sure that we address the issues most im-

portant to our local when we meet with the Employer at the bargaining table. Negotiations will begin sometime after August so, hopefully, we will be able to obtain a new contract before the old one expires. We also have our Council 5 Convention in October up in Du-

luth. The "Take a Break" lunch time sessions will continue as will the Labor Lunch events. All in all, everyone will have the opportunity to participate in our union activities over the course of the year. I look forward to talking to you.

Announcements

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Reminder: we will elect up to 2 members at the January 7, 2015 General Assembly to attend the Council 5 Social Media Workshop held Friday, January 23, 2015 at the Council 5 office. The local will cover 4 hours lost time and mileage for folks elected to attend the workshop. Our request from the local is that anyone putting their name forward be willing to commit to using skills gained for the work of our local. Please call me at 612-348-0266 if you have questions.

The 2015 Hennepin County Budget and levy of 2.10% was approved by the Commissioners at the December 16, 2014 Board meeting. The positions in the proposed HSPHD budget were included in that final budget so we should see more workers in the Child Protection ranks. Our hope is that this will provide some well-deserved relief to our

CP Investigators and Case Managers as they, hopefully, see a reduction in their caseloads. Members attending the December 2014 General Assembly brought books and toys which have been donated to the room used for supervised family visits at the Brookdale site. Thank you to everyone who brought a contribution.

We will begin our work for negotiations this year by reviewing our contract at next three General Assembly meetings beginning with the January 7th meeting. The meetings are held in HSB 110, 525 Portland Ave S, Minneapolis at 5:30 PM. All members are welcome to attend and participate in the discussion of what we would like to see proposed for improvements. Our current contract can be found on our Local 34 web page at:

<http://afscmemn.org/sites/afscmemnd6.prometheuslabor.com/files/>

[local_34_hennepin_county_social_service_unit_2014-2015_contract.pdf](#)

Please take some time to read through it before the meeting so that you are prepared to ask questions or speak to what you would like to see changed.

Council 5 is planning a Day of Service in April 2015 to celebrate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. A planning session is taking place at the Council 5 on Tuesday, January 6th. If you can assist, please contact Jennifer Munt at 651-287-0575 or via e-mail at jennifer.munt@afscmemn.org.

We have our work cut out for us this year. Let's all start off on the right foot by remembering to take time to breathe, to say good-bye to our retirees and say hi to our new coworkers and to plan vacations so you stay refreshed. Welcome 2015!

Jean



AFSCME Calendar— Early 2015

December 31: Scholarship Applications Available! Applications are available for AFSCME's **Family Scholarship**. The renewable, \$2,000 scholarship is for current high-school seniors who will graduate in 2015. The application deadline is December 31.

January 7: Here's Something to Tweet About! Interested in maximizing your social media skills? Then sign up for Council 5's Social Media Workshop. The hands-on training will show you how to get the most out of Facebook and Twitter to strengthen our union. Details: The free workshop is Friday January 23, 2015, from 1-4 p.m., at Council 5's South St. Paul office. There would be a limit of 2 spots per local union. Local 34 will select our representatives at our General Membership meeting on 1/7/2015.

January 29: Knocking Down More Barriers! A Women's Economic Security Summit takes place Thursday January 29 in St. Paul. Following the successful passage of the 2014 Women's Economic Security Act, the summit will discuss additional policies and actions necessary to break down barriers to work-family balance and economic security for women in Minnesota. The summit runs 8 a.m.-noon January 29 at the Kelly Inn, 161 St. Anthony Ave. Admission is free, but space is limited. Register online.

Upcoming Important Dates:
1. The next meeting of the Education, Engagement and Outreach (EEO) Committee will be held on **January 12, 2015** from 5:30 to 7:00 pm at Health Services Building, Room 111.
2. The next Labor Lunch will be held on **March 12, 2015**, from 12:00 to 1:00 pm. Location is TBD.

VIEW FROM THE CHEAP SEATS - Vicki Moore

Welcome 2015! September always feels like the beginning of the year to me; however, the calendar has turned and we find ourselves in a new year. Did you decide what you wanted to leave in 2014 and what you want to bring into your life in 2015?

For me, this process has resulted in mixed feelings. In May 2015, I end my time as one of Local 34's Vice Presidents. On one hand I am happy to pass this responsibility to a younger member of Local 34 who will bring fresh eyes and fresh energy to the Office. On the other hand, letting go is not without a certain amount of sadness. I am happy to say that I am experiencing more hope than sadness. There are many people who I would like to see seek the position of Vice President. I am very curious about who will step up.

I am not seeking a position on the Local 34 Executive Board but **I have agreed to serve as the**

Local 34 Nominations Chair this year. Nominations will open at the February General Assembly. If you have been a dues paying member of Local 34 for one year, you are eligible to seek an office. That means that you will have to have been a dues paying member for one year as of January 31, 2015. The Local 34 Constitution requires that all officer candidates be a dues paying member for one full year prior to the February General Assembly. {See list below}

This is not a time to be shy or to self-censor. We all know that our jobs have been and will continue to be defined by change. Every day our members reach out to me talking about change and how many of these changes require more time to complete paperwork that takes away from time to help our clients who after all are among the most vulnerable residents of Hennepin County. These conversations have been very interesting. Is the

answer less paperwork or more staff?

What you have to say about the conversation is important. Seeking a position on the Local 34 Executive Board means that you can bring your thoughts and ideas directly to the conversation at the Executive Board Level rather than communicating with someone like me to carry your message forward.

Finally, I want to give a shout out to **"Take a Break", the Local 34 Facebook Page and the Local 34 Website.** Watch for communication letting you know when "Take a Break" will be coming to your building. The Local 34 website, www.afscmelocal34.org, is updated frequently and carries our information and other Labor News. Finally, checkout our Facebook Page and join the conversation.

And that the **View from the Cheap Seats** for this month.

Local 34 Executive Board Nominations List—2015

The Offices of President, Vice President(s) and Chief Steward(s) positions rotate on a two-year cycle in order to maintain continuity. Local 34 will be seeking nominations for the following Officer positions:

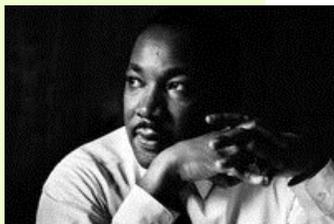
- Vice President
- Recording Secretary
- Membership Secretary
- Chief Steward
- Member-at-Large (3 positions)
- Trustee (three year term)
- Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation Delegate (5 positions)
- Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation Alternate (5 positions)
- Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation Delegate (6 positions)
- Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation Alternate (6 positions)

Martin Luther King Day will be celebrated on January 19th this year—Rev. King would have been 86 in January.

From the Council 5 website...

How Do We Keep the Dream Alive?

Fri, 12/19/2014



Council 5 is organizing a **Day of Service in April** to celebrate the life of Martin Luther King Jr. AFSCME members are invited to help decide what those activities could be and where they should take place.

Details. The first planning meeting is Tuesday Jan. 6 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Council 5's office, 300 Hardman Ave. S, South St. Paul. RSVP to Jennifer Munt at 651-287-0575 or **by email**.

King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, while marching with striking AFSCME sanitation workers in Memphis, Tenn. **Our Day of Service demonstrates that our union continues to march for economic and social justice.**



THE LOCAL 34 BANNER

Report from the December 2014 General Assembly

The Local passed a motion to spend up to \$200 on kits for Blessing Bags, to be assembled at the February GA meeting (*see page 9*).

The Local approved a request to donate \$200 to the Wel-

fare Rights Committee, and approved sending a speaker to address their rally on the opening day of the 2015 Legislative Session, and voted to endorse the Rally itself.

The Local approved sending

five \$34 gift certificates to the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation as holiday party gift certificates.

The Local approved renewing our MSSA membership for 2015 at \$25.

The Council 5 Arbitration Review Team dismissed a Local 34 grievance, which the E-Board will decide whether to appeal.

Former Local 2822 and 1719 Business Agent Mark Baker was seriously injured in a rollover near Rush City. As he recuperates at North Memorial, we circulated a get-well card for Mark.

Vicki Moore suggested the Local look into using new technologies for making our meetings accessible to others not physically present.

Membership Secretary Heather Hemmer reported that Membership has risen to over 2000 again, with 82% full members, 18% fair share fee payers.

Chief Stewards Williams and Gray reported that the second "Take a Break" at Century Plaza s successful, with nearly 90 signed up. The third opportunity was at South Suburban Hub in mid-December. Several investigations are underway in HSPHD, and the Local approved spending up to \$100 for printing additional Weingarten cards for upcoming "Take a Break" sessions.

President Diederich reported that Local 34 has about 200 PEOPLE contributors at an aver-

age level of \$4.20 per pay period.

She also elaborated on our Local's success correcting an EWS Supervisory and Managerial misconception that workers who spent as full 8 hours at the office on a day CURAM was down could be short-changed pay because it was thought the workers didn't produce sufficient make-up work under the circumstances. *Thank you to the two workers who bravely challenged their bosses and stood up for their rights!*

It was reported that some members are frustrated about losing 4 hours earned vacation time every pay period because Social Work caseloads are so busy they can't take any of the time off. The Employer needs to lighten the caseloads! How many of you are being told by your Supervisors that you can't get vacation time approved—even if you're going to lose it—because your work isn't caught up.? Let Vicki Moore and Kathy Kelly know!

John Herzog and Wes Volkenant reported on the MSSA Legislative Assembly session in November—new MSSA delegates will be elected at the January GA meeting.

A motion was approved to pay Lost Time up to 3 hours for each Member-at-Large for a Local 34 mapping project, and a motion was approved to pay Lost Time for

President Diederich to attend the January 29 Council 5 Presidents' Meeting.

Wes Volkenant was approved as Elections Chair for 2015 with Vicki Moore approved as Nominations Chair for 2015.

Heather Hemmer previewed the December 8 EE&O meeting, her last as Coordinator before Norm Meyer takes over. Topics to discuss included Workplace Actions and Organizing.

Ron Hart, a recent retiree has Stage 4 lymphoma—we approved a request to have Good and Welfare send Ron flowers and our well wishes!

President Diederich reported that HSPHD's Executive Committee is looking into how the Department can get out of "the cell phone business." They could have everyone {with a business need} receive stipends in order to buy personal phones—to use for County business, or they could purchase those same staff members low-cost I-Phones.

Matt Nelson reported that by 2025, the State may face 45,000 jobs without qualified employees. Expect an emphasis on educating to fill jobs—perhaps doing Tuition Reimbursement as a benefit, not Department by Department.

New Be Well Clinic Location- Starting January 5, 2015

The new and expanded HCMC Be Well Clinic is located on the street level of the 701 Building. The new clinic has six exams rooms, an onsite pharmacy, chiropractic care and acupuncture. There is no copay for

Hennepin County employees and adult dependents covered by the Standard or Advantage healthcare plans.

Call 612-873-7373 to schedule an appointment. For more infor-



mation visit the [Be Well Clinic website](#) or the [HCMC website](#). **The Be Well Clinic in the Government Center will close Friday, January 2 at noon.**

Hennepin County News

Employee Resource Groups are Coming to Hennepin County

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) is excited to announce the launch of the Employee Resource Group (ERG) program at Hennepin County. An ERG is an organizationally-supported group of employees

who share a common diversity characteristic (e.g., gender, disability status, religion or belief system, ethnicity or race, sexual orientation, generation, etc.) or consider themselves an ally of that affinity community.

ERGs provide an opportunity for

Hennepin County employees to connect within their affinity community and develop leadership and professional skills while promoting beneficial business outcomes for the organization and residents of Hennepin County.

Hennepin County Contact: Brent Holt

HC Administrative Manual: Emergency Closing and Release of Employees

Release of Employees: Before the Start of Standard Scheduled Hours

Released employees will be paid utilizing vacation, sick leave, paid time off, compensatory time, or by making up the time in accordance with provisions of Human Resources Rules or labor agreements. Employees with insufficient accrued leave hour balances may be allowed to run a negative vacation/sick leave/PTO balance.

Non-essential employees reporting to work when the official WCCO website closing announcement has been posted in advance of their standard starting time will not be eligible for call-in pay or show-up pay if the announcement is posted one hour or more prior to the employee's standard start time.

If the WCCO website closing announcement is not posted online one hour or more prior to the employee's scheduled start time, and the non-essential employee reports for work, the employee is eligible to be paid for any time worked, but not for less than three hours at their straight time rate.

Release of Employees: During Standard Scheduled Hours

If the release of employees occurs during a work shift, employees on duty will be paid for hours actually worked and may utilize vacation, sick leave, paid time off, compensatory time or leave without pay for the remainder of that work shift, or may make up the time as authorized by the appointing authority, provided that the hours worked in making up such time will not result in incurring overtime liability.

Employee Responsibility:

Employees are expected to check <http://minnesota.cbslocal.com> for official announcements of closing Hennepin County facilities. Non-essential employees are not to report to work if an emergency closing has been declared. On the website, look under "Quick Links" on the left side navigation, and

click on "School Closings". This link goes to the page of closing information. If there is a Hennepin County announcement, it would be listed under "Hennepin County Government."

Hennepin County also will post facility closing and release-of-employees notices in alert boxes on the home pages of both the county Internet website, www.Hennepin.us, and on the intranet site, HCCConnect. Employees without internet access at home or work, should contact their supervisor to obtain emergency closing or release of employee information.

Released employees are to secure their work areas before leaving (i.e., lock doors, turn lights and computers off, turn equipment power off, etc.).

Remaining on the Premises:

Employees and citizens may be advised not to leave the premises because of severe weather or other emergency conditions that may endanger their safety.

Remaining on the premises after hours will not entitle employees to overtime compensation or compensatory time off at a later date unless they remain at work because they are explicitly requested by departments to assist during the emergency situation or are properly authorized to continue to work.

Employer Authority:

In accordance with Minnesota Statute 12.37(2) (viii), the **Human Resources Department has the right to temporarily suspend the Hennepin County Human Resources Rules. In the case of significant staffing shortages, previously approved leave hours including vacation, paid time off, compensatory time off or SLWOP may be rescinded in order to provide staffing coverage. In order to respond to a long-term emergency, employees may be redeployed to alternative worksites or positions in order to carry out priority service functions.**

Hennepin County Human Re-

sources Rules, labor agreements and federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) define which hours worked by a non-exempt employee must be compensated at the premium rate of time and one-half. **Generally exempt employees may work more than 40 hours in a week without entitlement to premium pay.** In all cases, a labor contract, Human Resources Rules or a Human Resources representative should be consulted to determine the ability to arrange make-up hours without incurring premium pay liability and to verify the exempt/non-exempt status of employees.

Weather Event:

The Hennepin County Security Division of the Property Services Department is responsible for monitoring critical weather developments.



Security or Facilities Management will notify building occupants of such developments, and occupants will be informed whether they should shelter in place or evacuate the building accordingly. Should a critical weather event (e.g. tornado) occur, Property Services will conduct an overall site assessment and consult with County Administration and/or department directors to determine the necessity to suspend operations and/or close county facilities.

Power Outage:

Depending on the facility, it may or may not be necessary to suspend or shut down county operations (e.g. emergency generators) due to a power outage. When there is a power outage reported on county property, Facilities Management staff will respond and investigate the reason for the outage and contact local utility companies for assistance or information. Communication will be provided by the Director of Property Services to County Administration and department directors on anticipated down times until service can be restored.

2015 Health Incentive

Each year employees, retirees and spouses with PreferredOne insurance, both the standard and advantage plans, have the option of completing the steps to earn the health incentive.

To earn the 2015 health incentive individuals completed two wellness activities and the health assessment.

The health incentive for 2015 is \$15 off of office visit co-pays. This year 76.4% of the 10,151 people eligible earned the incentive.

To check and see if you earned the incentive log into www.preferredone.com/hc, click on Wellness Activity Documentation, select 2014 from the reporting year drop down.

Hennepin County Approves Deal to Build Last of Six Service Centers

The last of six, it would be built at Hiawatha and Lake in Minneapolis, by the Blue Line.

Construction could begin next year on the last of Hennepin County's six regional human service centers, because of a \$54.5 million land-construction deal approved by the County Board. On a split vote, the board agreed this week to buy a 6.5-acre parcel in Minneapolis, about 40 percent of which will be developed by the county. The county hopes to sell much of the property to developers for housing and businesses such as retail and restaurants. Because of the speculative portion of the deal, board Chairman Mike Opat and Commissioner Jeff Johnson voiced concerns and voted against it. Commissioner Peter McLaughlin called the site, on the southwest corner of Hiawatha Avenue and Lake Street, "almost indisputably the best site for the hub." It sits alongside the Metro Transit Blue Line light rail.



What Can Employers Monitor?



Can My Employer Monitor My Computer – Personal E-Mail Accounts

Your e-mail account may be personal, but your employer's network is not. By sending/receiving emails over your employer's network, you are giving up your expectation of privacy.

Can My Employer Monitor My Computer – Can This Get Me Fired?

Of course! That is why it is so important that you understand that you are being watched. Indeed, a recent survey by the American Management Association found that 30% of managers have terminated employees for internet misuse (28% for e-mail misuse).

Exceptions:

There are some instances where certain kinds of computer usage – even if the computer and/or network belong to the employer are protected.

- **Unionized employees:** Unions can negotiate with respect to electronic monitoring. Union employees also have the right to fight discipline imposed in connection with electronic monitoring.
- **Concerted activity:** Your employer may not fire you if you are engaging in what is known as "concerted activity." If you have been fired or disciplined for complaining about your working conditions to other coworkers using e-mail, or for using your work computer for union organizing activities, this may violate the National Labor Relations Act.
- **Retaliation.** If you are fired for writing emails about something at work that's illegal (discrimination, breaking wage laws, etc.) that you're trying to stop, you may have protection under anti-retaliation or whistleblower laws.

Can My Employer Monitor My Computer?

Anything you do on your work computer is subject to monitoring. The same applies to your phone, PDA and other devices. This may even apply to your personal, non-work accounts and devices, if the data is transmitted over your employer's network.

Can My Employer Monitor My Computer – Who Is Watching?

Your employer is watching. A 2007 survey by the American Management Association shows that two-thirds of employers monitor employee Internet access, while nearly half review files stored on their computers. Your employer may not be watching you every minute of every day, but what you do on your devices is backed up and can be searched. Employers can also screen for certain words, or watch for certain websites.

Can My Employer Monitor My Computer – What Can They See?

Your employer can monitor just about anything that comes in and out of work devices and over its network. This includes, but is not limited to, internet usage, downloads, files stored, anything displayed on screen, time on the computer, keystrokes, what websites are visited and for how long, words used, emails sent, received and stored, instant messaging and chatting. Your employer can also review deleted emails and files. If you are using a company phone, the employer may also monitor the call, voicemail and text messages.

Can My Employer Monitor My Computer – Company Owned Versus Personal

If your employer owns the equipment, it can look at nearly anything stored on the equipment. Even if the information is private. Even if the information is unrelated to work. If the equipment is yours, your employer cannot access information on that equipment without a court order. However, if you transmit data over the employer's network, the employer may have access to –and therefore be able to review – this data. If you must make private communications, consider using your personal cellular network.

Can My Employer Monitor My Computer – What is the Law?

Electronic Communications Privacy Act of 1986. This law prohibits unauthorized "interception" of electronic communications (e.g. telephone, email and computer use). But three exceptions to the Electronic Communications Privacy Act allow employers to have nearly unfettered access to employees' electronic communications.

- **Business Exception:** An employer may monitor employee use of its own systems for "legitimate business needs."
- **Consent to Monitoring:** If one party to the communication consents to the monitoring, then monitoring is permitted.
- **Employer Owned Systems:** The owner of the email, IM and phone message systems is allowed to access electronic communications.

Can My Employer Monitor My Computer – And What Should I Do?

The answer is simple – don't be stupid. Don't look at pornography at work. Don't send disparaging, racist, sexist or otherwise inappropriate emails. Keep your web

content appropriate. If you think that you should not be on a certain website or transmitting/receiving certain information, don't do it. If you must keep some-

thing private from your company, do it on your personal equipment, over your personal network. Do it from home. Don't be reckless. It can cost you your job.

2015 COLA Fact Sheet

Social Security Facts Benefits

	2015 Individual	2015 Couples
SSI	\$733	\$1100
RSDI / SSI Combo	\$753	\$1120
SSI Shared Household	\$488.67	\$733

RSDI-only will be increased by 1.7%
Medicare Part B Premium will stay at \$104.90.

MSA Standards – Individuals

MSA Grant (Non-Shared)	\$794.00
MSA Grant (Shared)	\$581.33

MSA Standards – Couples

	MSA Recipients Prior to 1-1-94	SA Eligible on or after 1-1-94
MSA Grant (Non-Shared)	\$1206	\$1191
MSA Grant (Shared)	\$1060	\$797

Spousal Maintenance Needs Cap \$ 2980.50

Spousal Asset Allowance
\$ 33,851 Minimum \$ 119,220 Maximum

Special Income Standard	\$2199.00
Remedial Care	\$242.00

PERSONAL NEEDS ALLOWANCE increases to \$96.00

2015 Payee Fee will be \$41.00

Railroad Retirement and VA Benefits

Railroad Retirement: Send an email to HSR Supervisor Kristi Martinson to obtain verification of the 2015 RRR amount. The email should include all of your team's RRR cases with the client name, social security number and/or the railroad re-

irement claim number. This information will not be available until mid-December.

VA Benefits: To verify Veteran's Benefits send an email with all of your team's VA cases to Lynn Lyons. The email should

include the veteran's name, veteran's SSN, veteran's DOB and the VA claim number. If the information needed is for the surviving spouse, please note this. She will gather the information and return it to you.

State Expects \$1 Billion Budget Surplus



Minnesota's string of good economic news continued Dec. 4, with state economists projecting a budget surplus of \$1.037 billion. The anticipated surplus means there will be no need to cut jobs or state services. Instead, the surplus means money actually will be available to meet priorities when legislators convene in January.

Minnesota Management and Budget expects a \$556 million surplus in the current budget, which ends June 30. That is \$528 million more than anticipated when the Legislature adjourned in May. The bigger surplus is the result of lower-than-expected spending and higher-than-expected revenue – primarily from income and sales taxes. By law, a third of this surplus will be placed in reserves as a rainy-day fund.

MMB also projects an additional surplus of \$637 million for the 2016-2017 budget, based on current revenue and spending patterns. Combined with this year's balance, MMB anticipates a total surplus of \$1.037 billion for the next two-year budget. That's despite inflation and the belief that U.S. economic growth will not be as robust as it has been.

MMB will release an updated forecast in late February. That forecast will provide the final numbers that Gov. Mark Dayton and the Legislature work with as they craft their revenue and spending plans for 2016-2017.

Paid Sick Leave: It's Catching! How many workers in our nation benefit from paid sick leave? According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 61 percent of all workers in the private sector do. That's appalling but not surprising. It's just another consequence of the assault on unions by corporations and political extremists. Declining union membership means nearly four out of 10 private-sector workers come to work sick – or don't get paid. The picture is noticeably different for state and local government workers, where union membership is stronger. For decades, AFSCME helped raise workplace standards for all public service workers. Today, nine out of 10 workers in state and local government receive paid sick leave and, of those who belong to a union, it's nearly everyone – 97 percent. Employees shouldn't have to risk their health to do their jobs. A healthy employee is a productive one. That attitude appears to be catching.

THE LOCAL 34 BANNER

Don't Work For Free

Angel Gardner-Kocher, Local 2822 Steward, Minneapolis



We've all been there. You're on your break and a patron, customer, or a co-worker has a question that needs your expertise. You have a million things on your to-do list, but with staff being so stretched thin at work, **you can't seem to find the time to get it all done, so you eat lunch at your desk while you chip away at the tasks.** The pressure to provide excellent service to the residents of Hennepin County, be a team player and manage all of the "other duties as assigned" is getting harder and harder as our staffing levels drop or remain stagnant and our workload increases.

At Hennepin County Library, while vacancies are no longer being held, they are not being filled quickly, nor does staffing meet the demands of library operations. Director Lois Langer Thompson reported that over the last five years, HCL has decreased FTE by 57, while increasing service hours and square footage. Last year, the library expanded the hours by over 10,000 hours a year without increasing staff. As a result, **many library workers spend more hours**

on public service desks and have less time to complete the other tasks that are part of their job description. At meetings and trainings, innovation and creativity are encouraged, but our current workload and staffing leave us without enough time to do the things that make our jobs meaningful and connect to the communities we serve.

This trend is not isolated to only libraries, or Local 2822 workers, but persists across all job classes at Hennepin County. The Education, Engagement and Outreach Committee has heard from various departments that **employees feel the pressure to work through breaks, come in early and/or stay late and bring work home with them. This creates unrealistic expectations for our successors and peers at our jobs and disrupts our work-life balance.** In many departments, working for free has become a norm, if not an expectation. **If it is indeed an expectation in your department and you are not an exempt employee, then it is wage theft.** If it is a norm

for you, I challenge you to let it go. **Leave work at work.** If you can't resist working on your break, leave your desk, or better yet, leave the building. Your productivity actually goes up when you take breaks and maintaining a healthy work-life balance means less susceptibility to stress-related illnesses. **For an employee working an 8 hour day, you have the right to two 15-minute rest periods and a full 30-60 minute unpaid lunch under the union contract.** Make sure you and your coworkers are taking them regularly. Union members fought hard and lives were sacrificed for the 8 hour work day. Let's not reverse the gains that they made.

The Education, Engagement, and Outreach Committee is collecting information on how often employees work for free. We are distributing electronic time card worksheets to those who are interested in documenting how much time they actually work per pay period. If you are interested in participating, contact eeando-action@gmail.com.

Shared with Local 34 by the Education, Engagement and Outreach (EE&O) Committee members from Local 34....



Off the Clock Work Laws

Your Employee Rights & Off-the-Clock-Work:

Federal and state labor laws prohibit employers from permitting employees to do **off-the-clock** work without pay.

Employers **must pay workers for all work that they knew about or should have known about.** Not

surprisingly, many employers look the other way while employees perform unpaid work voluntarily or under pressure.

Laws about Off-the-Clock Work:

Federal Law - The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requires employers to pay for all hours

worked, whether or not those hours are properly recorded on time cards or time sheets.

Under the FLSA, **a work day begins when an employee starts their first work-related activity, and ends when they finish their last work-related activity of the day.**

Youth Behavioral-Health Issues are the Focus of a New U of M Social-Work Training Program

By Andy Steiner | MinnPost | December 3, 2014

Nationwide, there is a growing shortage of social workers trained to assist youth facing mental illness and addiction. This year, with an eye to filling that gap, **Joseph Merighi**, associate professor of **social work** at the University of Minnesota, proposed the Minnesota Social Work Initiative in Behavioral Health, a program designed to train masters in social work (MSW) students to take jobs at com-



Associate Professor Joseph Merighi

munity-based behavioral-health clinics, primary care clinics and substance-abuse centers.

To fund the program, Merighi applied for a \$1.28 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' **Health Resources and Services Administration**. In September he received word that the university had won the full award.

The grant's principal investigator, Merighi explained that part of the money has already been put to work to fund a program for a cohort of 30 University of Minnesota MSW students. The 30 Behavioral Health Fellows, as

they are now called, will graduate this spring. A new crop of 30 students will begin the program next fall, and another the year after, for a total of 90.

"We're training this group to work at the intersection of mental health and substance-abuse issues," Merighi said. "There is a work-force shortage for behavioral health, and this particular grant targeted a specific underserved population: children, adolescent and 'transitional-age' youth between the ages of 16 and 25. Our goal is to get our MSW students trained and working as soon as possible."

Quick response to a specific need

Merighi and his colleagues heard about the grant opportunity in April. Though the deadline was tight — applications were due June 3 — they decided to apply. With the assistance of MSW/PhD student Christy Dechaine, Merighi turned all his attention to the task.

"We spent the month of May writing the proposal," he said. "We proposed training cohorts of 30 students a year over a three-year period."

The grant came through, and by October 1, 30 Behavioral Health Fellows — MSW students in the final, or "concentration" year of the program — had been given

a one-time award of \$10,000 to fund their education and focus on behavioral health.

"We drafted a curriculum in which students will get training in the requisite areas of study in substance abuse, trauma, mental health and inter-professional practice," Merighi said. Fellows will also complete a 480-hour internship in a community-based agency that targets mental health and substance abuse disorders in children, teens and young adults.

Simulations with actors

The Fellows' counseling skills will be further refined with the help of the University of Minnesota's **Academic Health Center's Simulation Center**, Merighi said. In the simulations, professional actors will be hired to pose as

standardized patients in specific case scenarios that the students will lead. The sessions will be digitally recorded and then analyzed by faculty and students. "They will also complete another 45-minute session with actors playing a family," Merighi said.

All this training and preparation has one specific goal: producing graduates qualified to work with a vulnerable population in need of their services.

"We are very excited to have the opportunity to train graduate social work students who will expand and strengthen the behavioral health work force in the Twin Cities," Merighi said. "The need is clearly there and we are addressing it."



Dear Jean and Kathy & AFSCME 34—

Thank you for your contribution to my campaign for Hennepin County Commissioner, District 3.

On November 4, I prevailed at the polls—this has been a team effort, and I am so grateful and honored.

My first months on the board have been tremendous. I'm chair of the Health and Human Services Committee, which covers roughly 45% of the County's \$1.8 billion budget.

We have made the county compliant with the Women's Economic Security Act, passed at the legislature earlier this year.

Together with Commissioner Jan Callison, **I will represent Hennepin County in a collaboration with Ramsey County to possibly combine our residential treatment facilities for teens.**

And, we're zeroing in on the best ways for the county to support children in their youngest years.

After a year on the campaign trail and two elections, I am so excited to continue building a community in which everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

Thank you again for your support.

My best,
Marion Greene

Blessing Bags for the Homeless

If you are looking for a **list of ways that you can give back to the community** you live in & how to get kids involved, one of the ways would be to **create Blessing Bag kits** to hand out to those in need or to give to homeless shelters. Here is a link to a **FREE printable Blessing Bag checklist**.

Handing out a Blessing Bag to someone gives you a very real way to meet someone's immediate needs by providing them with basic supplies such as toiletries, water, food and warmth.

Local 34 has voted to spend up to \$200 for supplies used to assemble bags at February's GA.

An Additional THANK YOU!

Hi Karen and Miguel,

I received an awesome plant arrangement last night! I want to thank the Union for sending this wonderful array of plants and for its well wishes for my good health. And yes, I am back at work and feeling much better.

I am so appreciative for this caring gesture!

Cheryl Branch, NW Hub HSR



NLRB Gives Employees Right to Use Employer Email for Union Organizing

Kirsten B. White and Ross H. Friedman December 12 2014

The much anticipated decision overturned the NLRB's 2007 Register Guard decision and adopted a presumption that employees are entitled to use their employer's email system to engage in Section 7 activity while on nonworking time, absent a showing by the employer of special circumstances that justify specific restrictions.

NLRB Rules That Employees May Use Work Email for Union Communications

Olivia Z. Weisman December 16 2014

In a divided opinion issued on December 11, 2014, the National Labor Relations Board decided that employees who have been given access to their employer's email system in the course of their work are entitled to use the system on nonworking time to engage in statutorily protected discussions about their terms and conditions of employment. *Purple Communications, Inc.*, 361 NLRB 126 (2014). In so doing, the NLRB overruled its divided 2007 decision, *Register Guard*, 351 NLRB 1110 (2007), to the extent that it held that employees had no statutory right to use their employer's email system for Section 7 purposes.

Although *Purple Communications* overruled NLRB precedent, the NLRB was careful to note that its decision was "limited." Specifically, the new rule permitting employees to use employer email systems for Section 7 purposes applies only to employees who have already been granted access to the employer's email system in the course of their work and does not require employers to provide such access.

More to Read About this NLRB Ruling on Employer E-Mail Use

- <http://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=a8672eb9-c6a3-427b-9d50-f94c9d87c2ea>
- <http://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=d55ccdbe-bc77-4f96-9fe8-fb0238c046af>
- <http://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=d8392c15-be0a-4977-b9f1-5b1bcfb2e4a>
- <http://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=85a30bc6-9080-4e22-8892-c0a45686ea50>
- <http://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=db8d63de-f22a-4c0b-afed-45bda5aec30b>

THE LOCAL 34 BANNER

Labor Law and You: New Protections for Transgender Public Employees

From the *Daily Kos* website::

The Obama administration once again moves America forward on protections for transgender workers. Months after President Obama signed an **executive order** prohibiting federal contractors

from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, the Justice Department has announced that the Civil Rights Act **forbids public employers from discriminating** on the basis of gender identity:

The department will no longer take the position that the "prohibition against discrimination based on sex does not encompass gender identity per se (including transgender discrimi-

nation)," Atty. Gen. Eric H. Holder Jr. said in a memo to U.S. attorneys. It's a reversal of a position the department took as recently as 2006, the memo says.

This doesn't end the need for a federal **Employment Non-Discrimination Act** that would prohibit discrimination by private employers, but since the incoming Republican Congress will certainly not be passing any such thing, it's an important step.

More Labor Law and You: Overtime Pay

From *Opinion Piece in The Hill*:

Overtime pay is to the middle class what the minimum wage is to low-wage workers. In 1975, more than 65 percent of salaried American workers earned time-and-a-half pay for every hour worked over 40 hours a week, but by 2013, that number had dropped to less than 11 percent.

That's because the income thresh-

old at which employers are required to pay overtime has been allowed to erode to only \$23,660 a year, less than the poverty line for a family of four. The 89 percent of salaried workers who now earn over that threshold can be forced to work unlimited overtime hours for no additional pay at all.

And according to a recent Gallup poll, that's exactly what's happening. Salaried Americans now report working an average of 47 hours a week—18 percent report

working more than 60 hours per week. If it feels like you're working more hours for less money than your parents did a generation ago, it's probably because you are.

But it doesn't have to be this way: President Obama could raise the overtime threshold to \$69,000—enough to cover the same 65 percent of salaried workers that it covered 40 years ago—and with *no prior congressional approval*.

Revisiting a Supreme Court Case We Previewed This Fall: 'Employers' Win "Busk" Case 9-0

Time Spent Waiting to Clear Security Not Compensable

The Supreme Court has ruled unanimously that time spent waiting to clear security after a work shift is not compensable time under the FLSA. The opinion was authored by Justice Thomas, and Justice Sotomayor filed a separate concurring opinion.

The Court held that time waiting to go through security at the end of the shift was neither a "principal activity" that employees were employed to perform, nor "integral and indispensable" to such principal activities. Rather, the security screenings were non-compensable "postliminary" activities under the Portal-to-Portal Act.

The case is *Integrity Staffing So-*

lutions v. Busk. The Court specifically rejected the employees' argument that the employer could have reduced the wait times to de minimis levels, but chose not to, resulting in 25 minute wait times.

Justice Thomas wrote that such arguments are properly the subject of contractual negotiation between employees and employers, not FLSA suits.

Recommended Further Reading on the Busk Case:

For an interesting perspective on how the Thomas opinion can help Union Organizing, go to: **"Unions Just Got a Big Legal Victory Handed to Them.... By Clarence Thomas?"**

Or, you might read a review of the decision by Moshe Marvit, author of ***Why Labor Organizing Should be a Civil Right***, in *In These Times*, in an article titled: **"SCOTUS Rules Workers Don't Need To Be Paid for All Their Time Working"**

Or, you might try, **"Amazon Won Big at the Supreme Court. Here's Why You Shouldn't Follow Their Example"**

Local 34 Officers

President:

Jean Diederich
348-0266 – HSB—961

Vice Presidents:

Kathy Kelly (1st)
348-6593—FJC- L890
Vicki Moore (2nd)
348-6051 — FJC—L890

Chief Stewards:

Tywanna Gray (Sr)
596-7261—CP –630
Kela Williams (Jr)
348-9152 – CP—630

Recording Secretary:

Laura Ross
348-6881 — HSB—961

Treasurer:

Patrick Regan
348-8760 – FJC - L890

Membership Secretary:

Heather Hemmer
please contact her by
e-mail – CP 630

Sergeant-At-Arms:

Andrea Lazo-Rice
348-6605 – HSB—961

Members-At-Large:

- Kay Powell
596-7820 - FJC - L890
Jacquelin Poole
348-4246 – HSB - 961
- Angel Alexander
596-1885 - CP 1—630
- Miguel Salazar
348-8322 — NW Hub
- Deb Konechne
543-0155 — E Side—
701A
- Sharon Streeter
596-9714—CP 1—630



Miguel Salazar serves as a Local 34 Member-at-Large officer. An HSR—Senior, Miguel is located at the Northwest Hub. Prior to joining the E-Board in 2011, Miguel served as a Steward for 5 years.

Local 34 Stewards

Margo Blay-Bugbee
348-9828 Century Plaza—
Managed Health Care
Deborah Diggins (new)
348-9503, Century Plaza
Ibrahim Farah
978-9350, Century Plaza
Emily Frazier (new)
348-0810, Century Plaza
Leah Hicks (re-instated)
596-8873, Century Plaza
Fatuma Kassim
596-8457, Century Plaza
Watchen Marshall
702-9254, Century Plaza
Ahmed Mohamed
348-9276, Century Plaza

Zachary Rice
348-2274, Century Plaza
Jamoda White
596-8948, Century Plaza
Antoinette Simmons (new)
348-0795, South Suburban Hub
Karen Elhindi
651-248-7797{C} - Northwest Hub
Terry Grace
348-7308, Juvenile Justice Center
Lindsay Schwab
596-7170, Family Justice Center
Halima Said
543-0380, Family Justice Center
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Aric Wiste
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Maureen Glover
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348-4204, 1800 Chicago
Dennis Moore
879-3560, 1800 Chicago
Mara Hill
432-7107, 1800 Chicago
Caroline Malone
348-4204, 1800 Chicago

Eve Lee (new)
543-1615, Eastside Neighbor-
hood Services
Jody Stadler
348-7371, Sabathani
Shawnice Reid
543-2622, NorthPoint Medical
Jacqueline Coleman
543-2605, NorthPoint

Trustees

Paul Madison, Douglas Graham,
3rd Trustee position is Vacant

Delta Dental Trustee

Monica Jochmans

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or Amanda Abell (MC L890)
612-596-8946



Local 34 stewards attended Day on the Hill in 2012. With the new Legislature, the 2015 Day on the Hill will be a great opportunity for AFSCME.



"We all do better, when we all do better." - Senator Paul Wellstone

AFSCME Local 34 Hennepin County Social Services Unit

January 2015 Issue

AFSCME Local 34
P.O. Box 15222
Minneapolis, MN 55415-0222



Who We Are

The 1.6 million members of AFSCME (The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees) provide the vital services that make America happen. With members in hundreds of different occupations— from nurses to school bus drivers, child care providers to sanitation workers — AFSCME advocates for fairness in the workplace, excellence in public services and prosperity and opportunity for all working families.

Good and Welfare

The Good & Welfare Committee was established to send remembrances to dues paying members at times of happiness or sorrow. This includes marriages, the birth or adoption of a child, prolonged illness or hospitalization, or the death of a member, immediate family member or significant other – as defined in the Contract.

In the case of surgery or prolonged illness, or for the birth or adoption of a child, flowers or plants can be sent to a member. In situations involving the death of a member or a death in the family of a member, memorials can be sent. ("Family" is defined the same as in Article 16 – Funeral Leave – in our contract; it includes: spouse, child, significant other, aunt/ uncle, father/ mother, sister/ brother, grandparent/ grandparent-in-law, grandchildren, niece/ nephew, or a person regarded as a member of the member's immediate family). In the event of members getting married, retiring, gaining U.S. citizenship, or for a death in the family of a member or in the case of the death of a member, a card can be sent to the family.

Please send all requests for remembrances to the co-Chairs for the Good and Welfare Committee - **Marcia Dietz (MC L890) or Amanda Abell (MC L890)**. The referrals must include the name of the member and the reason for your request. If the request is for a plant or flowers, you will also need to include the person's home phone number for delivery purposes.

We're on the Web!

County Board Passes 2015 Budget, Tax Levy Increase of 2.1%

Budget evaluation reduces proposed property tax levy by 0.65 percent

We're on Facebook, Too!

(It's a closed group: e-mail Amanda Abell for an Invite)



Hennepin County approved an overall increase of 2.1 percent for next year's county property tax levy, while Ramsey County held steady for the second year in a row. The proposed budget presented in September called for a property tax levy of just under \$700 million. Since then, commissioners trimmed over \$4 million during the budget review process to reduce the property tax levy increase to \$695.6 million or 2.10 percent.

But much of the Hennepin County Board's attention was directed at Sheriff Rich Stanek's budget, which commissioners pledged to rein in largely because of concerns about overtime pay that came in at \$5 million for 2014, double the projected amount. In a unanimous vote, the board agreed to hire a consultant to look into the sheriff's staffing and organizational structure — what Commissioner Jan Callison called "outside expertise." The board also decreased the sheriff's authorized full-time staff level by 30 positions to 778, to establish the discussion "around a real number," Callison said. The department currently has the equivalent of 754 employees. The board took a third step by setting aside \$500,000 of the sheriff's budget in a contingency fund. If Stanek needs

or wants to use the money, he will have to return to the board for approval.

In contrast to last week's pointed questioning of Stanek, a former Republican legislator, the DFL-controlled board's action went smoothly. The sheriff addressed the commissioners before the vote, touting accomplishments that include an internationally accredited crime lab, oversight of the disposal of 14 tons of prescription drugs, and a 36 percent "across the board" decrease in county crime. Stanek called overtime pay "a management tool," saying that it was "not ideal, but it is essential — unfortunately." The sheriff, an elected official who relies on the board for funding, agreed to the outside consultant. "We don't want some mystique behind the scenes of why we do something," he said.

The approved 2015 budget for Hennepin County is \$1,809,790,375. Commissioners carefully evaluated projects and programs in the proposed budget," said Commissioner Jan Callison, chair of the budget and capital investment committee. "I am pleased that we could lower the property tax levy while planning for the future." The 2015 budget includes funding for new initiatives to expand county efficiency and effectiveness, provides new resources for workforce

development, and continues support for early childhood and pre-K learning. "Our 2015 budget continues the county's history of thoughtful and responsible management," said Commissioner Mike Opat, chair of the board. "The final product is something in which all residents can take pride."

Commissioner Peter McLaughlin said it "reflects ongoing efforts of this county to run a high-quality operation," including efforts to help those who aren't doing well. Callison called the levy increase an "appropriate" level, but Commissioner Jeff Johnson said he would have preferred to hold the tax levy flat, and voted no on the budget. "People are hurting even though the recession is technically over," he said.

In addition to the already planned efforts for 2015, the board asked county staff to evaluate the possibility of a parental leave program and to evaluate funding for food shelves to ensure strategic delivery of food services across the county.

Hennepin County will collect \$695 million in property taxes next year. The owner of a median-valued home of \$219,600 will see an increase of \$31 in the county portion of their tax bills.



The new My AFSCME Dental web site—answers to your questions, provided by Council 5