

CWA 7250 Union Update

Fall 2023



Membership Meeting: THIS Wednesday, September 20th 2023 at 7:00pm via Zoom

Local Executive Board Nominations Meeting: Wednesday, September 27th 2023 7:00pm via Zoom

Union Hall Zoom: XXXXXXXXXXXXX

or Dial In: XXXXXXXXXXXXX

See below for Notes and/or Links on . . .

Victory at Rove Pest Control! – GoodStock, Sassafra & QAMN Updates - AT&T Techs Fight for Health & Safety – AT&T Call Center Moves in to Bloomington – Bloomington Sick & Safe Time – Historic CWA National Convention - Grievance Reports: DirecTV, AT&T Retail & Call Center – Local By-Laws – RIP Dawn Baas

Victory at Rove Pest Control!



On Friday, September 15th the call center workers at **Rove Pest Control, Inc.** in Oakdale MN voted decisively to unionize with **CWA Local 7250**. The workers at Rove started discussing unionization this Spring and got in touch with CWA in June. Rove workers are underpaid - with no annual raises, substandard health benefits, and no bereavement time. Management had been making the call center workers clean the office bathrooms.

CWA 7250's Organizing Committee met with the Rove call center employees and established a Rove organizing committee. The committee planned strategy and outreach and pushed for

an early election. We filed an **Unfair Labor Practice** charge when the company started targeting one of the union supporters for harassment. The call center workers hung tough during Rove's pathetic anti-union campaign (that CWA prepared them for) – and despite losing a couple of supporters who quit the job altogether, and another supporter being hospitalized during the vote, the workers voted overwhelmingly to unionize - only one of the call center workers voted against the union.

This may be a small unit, but already the Committee is starting to make inroads into the Rove outside technicians (who service homes and businesses). Local 7250 stewards **Hector Capote** and **Shari Wojtowicz** have agreed to serve on the Bargaining Committee with Rove call center workers **Greg Bute**, **Alex Johnson**, and **Bruce Nielsen** to negotiate big changes. Rove member **Zach Sager** will work with **Vince Opheim** and **Kieran Knutson** on mobilization in support of the bargaining. – **Continued** -



CWA 7250 Organizing Committee member Vince Opheim gives a rousing speech at the Victory Party

The pest control industry is a growing, multi-million-dollar industry, with little oversight, poor conditions, and little-to-no union presence – but

thanks to the self-organized workers at Rove – supported by CWA 7250 activists, that is starting to change.

Big thanks to Local members **Vince Opheim, Hector Capote, Larry Thompson, Chad Perkins, Kasie Garcia, Lewis Brown, Shomari Conley, Shari Wojtowicz, Michelle Richardson, Josh Pelant, Justin Gilbert-Whitfield, Monica Hofe, Dave Bennett, Kieran Knutson** and everyone else who contributed to this win. Special shout out to **CWA District 7 staff** for the support, and **Kera Peterson** from the **Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation**, and **Bernie Burnham, President of the Minnesota AFL-CIO** for showing up and spreading the word about this fight.

GoodStock and Sassafras Near Completion of First Contracts; QAMN Activision/Blizzard Under Microsoft Neutrality Agreement

CWA 7250 will soon add two new contracts to our list – and the first non-telecom/non-satellite TV contracts under our Local: **GoodStock**, “an e-commerce platform supporting progressive causes and campaigns”; and the **Sassafras Tech Collective**, “a web/app design and development company for social justice organizations, non-profits, academics, artists, and others”.

Both of these efforts were driven by the workers themselves (with assistance and advice from CWA 7250) and both contracts contain some important innovations – Neither GoodStock or Sassafras workers can be disciplined for refusing to work struck work or goods (with any companies on strike) - and Sassafras workers can support the BDS movement in solidarity with Palestinian workers.

Big respect to **Genevieve Williams, Sara Chappell-Dick, and Anshu Shrestha** for bargaining a 22% raise in the base pay + 5% annual COLA at GoodStock. Big respect to **Alex A., Mariam A., Melody B., Kevin C., Jill D., Devney H., and Shae M-P** at Sassafras for bargaining a contract with an \$88K minimum base wage and annual raises of at least 5%.

Meanwhile the massive organizing campaign at the **Quality Assurance MN** division of **Activision/Blizzard** has hit interesting terrain - with the purchase of Activision/Blizzard by **Microsoft** likely to be finalized in late Fall 2023. CWA recently negotiated a neutrality agreement with Microsoft meaning the company will not oppose attempts by the union to organize. Even prior to the neutrality agreement, over 40% of the employees at the QAMN had signed cards for the union – so when the sale to Microsoft and the neutrality agreement with CWA are finalized, we will hit the ground running.



AT&T Techs Fight for Jobs, Health & Safety

Recently CWA 7250 requested information on the **Legacy T “watermark”** – an important clause in CWA’s agreement with AT&T that requires the company to maintain a workforce of 2,000 or more. Because the company is just barely at the watermark (with some questionable math) we have asked the CWA T&T Office to push the company on **4 NTS Tech jobs** that have not been back-filled in our Local – in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, and South Dakota.

We also recently confronted the company and their outsourced real estate manager JLL about the failure to maintain safe and healthy worksites in Iowa and Minnesota. **CWA 7250 Steward Steve Wilson** out of Des Moines IA, had been alerting the company to issues with uncontrolled overgrowth in and around AT&T facilities that he services for months with no resolution. AT&T’s own policy, OP78, states that these lots should be free of any obstructions or growth that could be used for concealment of any kind and 3 feet on either side of the fence line must be clear. Steve’s documentation showed that the company has been in violation of its own policy all year long. As Steve said, “I’m from the country so I know all about foliage and overgrowth – but because I’m from the country, I know what that foliage and overgrowth could be concealing”.

CWA 7250 Area Vice-President (Techs) Sean McCawley registered similar complaints about trash pick-up at the Bloomington tech site. Sean estimates trash has been picked up just 3 or 4 times in the last two years. With no one at the company taking responsibility – we escalated right to the JLL managers, listed in the AT&T Webphone. JLL clearly wasn’t used to talking to union people – people who are firm and don’t back down just because you have some fancy title. After the first manager (who has told us in writing he’d have updates soon) said he wasn’t accountable to us and hung up on us – we called his boss’s boss and demanded results. AT&T was none to pleased that we were calling their contractors – but too bad! – they hadn’t responded either (and plus, these JLL people are listed in Webphone). Now we believe we finally have AT&T management’s attention to address these long-standing issues of neglect.



Aerial view of Iowa AT&T site. The red line shows approx. fence line & lot – which, per ATT OP78, is supposed to be clear of obstruction & concealment



Foliage overgrowth at AT&T site in Iowa – chest and head-high in some areas



AT&T Call Center Fully Moved-In to Bloomington MN Office

Workers at the Minneapolis Business Collections Center have been fully moved into the AT&T office space at 7900 Xerxes Ave in Bloomington MN. With the help of unprecedented attrition – we lost 17% of the Center workforce in one year – all of the employees from the 8th, 11th, and 12th floors from the AT&T Tower downtown are now snugly crammed into the 3rd floor at the Bloomington office.

While the location on a single floor does make some organizing and communicating easier, there are worries about how cold and flu season will play out this winter (not to mention if there's a big spike in COVID) – and the lack of room to grow makes new hiring seem less likely. Being in the same building with the AT&T Mobility call center (and again with AT&T Teleconferencing) opens up some common-mobilization possibilities, and the free parking is nice.



Wearing Red for UNION Thursdays in Bloomington

The most recent AT&T management-massacre wiped out the Attendance Manager position for the Minneapolis (now Bloomington) Call Center. The new Attendance Manager **Freda McFarland** is based in Murfreesboro TN, which means she will not be dealing with us in person, but over a screen and won't know us as people and co-workers. It will be a challenge to get attendance management to understand special circumstances, see the human element, and have a heart. But we will do whatever is necessary to represent our members.

Bloomington Sick and Safe law

Speaking of attendance – one very positive new development is the implementation of the **Bloomington Sick and Safe law** and the new **Minnesota Sick and Safe law**. The new implementation is a big change for those of us working in Bloomington, MN. Previously the company had refused to use our contractual paid sick days (Article 20) in conjunction with the municipal laws that made the absences covered (non-chargeable, non-disciplinable) – instead they snatched vacation days if you asked for the day to be “covered” by the law.

But now, after years of fighting with the company over this (CWA 7250 member **Amy Roseman** has a grievance over “**vacation-snatching**” in front of the CWA national President right now), the company is now implementing the municipal and state sick and safe laws to allow us to use our contractual sick days in conjunction with Bloomington Sick and Safe law and the new Minnesota Sick and Safe law. Vacation days will only be used once our Article 20 sick days are exhausted.

This means that at least 48 hours of sick time will now be PAID and EXCUSED (Without having to use FMLA, Job Accommodations, or Vacation). **This is a big victory!**

Bloomington Sick and Safe law – CONTINUED -

OK, but what about the biweekly emails we've been getting notifying us of our available Bloomington Sick & Safe hours?

Some members are being told they have hours available even though they've burned through their Article 20 sick days and vacation time back when we were still in Minneapolis.

The short answer: We don't know yet.



Call Center CWA 7250 Stewards Meeting

Right now, the company is saying that despite the official notifications you've been receiving, if you've used your contract sick days and vacation, then you don't have any. However, it is plausible that the Bloomington law doesn't care about what happened before we moved to Bloomington – and that whatever happened prior, we still got Bloomington sick days coming . . . This would explain why we've been getting those emails – and it may be a familiar case of AT&T's left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing.

The union's position is that's if the company is giving official notices to members listing their individual paid/excused sick time available, the company must honor those notices.

We will be meeting with the company, reaching out to Bloomington authorities and filing grievances and mobilizing as necessary.

Report from the Historic CWA National Convention

Our Local sent a significant contingent of 10 members to what turned out to be a historic and sometimes contentious National CWA Convention in July. Our goals were to try to continue to build ties with other Locals that had the same or similar attitude as CWA 7250 in terms of militancy, solidarity, and democracy. We wanted to meet and connect with the other fighters.

We also wanted to help support our member, steward, and former Local President **Shari Wojtowicz** who was running for **Vice President of the CWA Telecommunications & Technologies** office – which oversees the Legacy T contract. While not successful in that race, we believe we helped make some strong points about the need for accountability and transparency in that office.



As events developed, our delegates decided to oppose **Ed Mooney's** candidacy for President, based on his history of abusive conduct towards union members, officers, and staff – including racist, sexist, and homophobic jokes and slurs. Before the vote at convention the results of our pre-Convention polling showed that a majority of those who responded favored **District 6 Vice President Claude Cummings, Jr.** – and so that's how our delegates voted. And after two rounds of

voting, Brother Cummings was elected President, becoming the first Black President in the history of CWA and one of the very few African-American presidents of any major union. – **Continued**

CWA National Convention CONTINUED

Our Local also spoke out against attempts by Mooney supporters to ban informal caucuses within the union - a move that could be used to squash any dissent within the union. It was defeated 60%-40%. Finally, our Local sided with the majority of the Convention to call for a renewed commitment to “Mutual Respect” between members, where there is no place for bullying, abuse, racism, sexism, or homophobia.

We also distributed our leaflet “**NO MORE BUSINESS AS USUAL**” calling for major changes in CWA: <https://www.cwa7250.org/index.php/news/225-cwa-7250-on-presidential-election-no-more-business-as-usual>

CWA 7250 is a small local right now – but we are well known and respected by many across the union for our willingness to think for ourselves, speak up, and stand up for what’s right. We are hopeful that this will be a new era for CWA with openness, a willingness to aid Locals that are organizing and fighting, and a commitment to justice for all working-class people. Thanks to all of CWA 7250 member who represented at Convention: Delegates Kasie Garcia, Kieran Knutson, and Chad Perkins. Media: Vince Opheim and Michelle Richardson

Grievance Reports & Other Notes:



DirecTV – Open Grievances: One regarding end Job Accommodations breaks that were formerly paid and then without reason or negotiation made unpaid **Other Notes:** **CWA 7250 Area Vice-President (DTV) Ann Jensen** helped win a major victory at the national level that restored the “Life Happens” attendance tool and reduced attendance points for 137 workers at DirecTV including 3 in 7250. See: <https://www.cwa7250.org/images/Contracts/FinalLifeHappens.settlement.MOA.CWA.signatures.pdf>; **Arion Walker** was unanimously appointed DTV Steward, after **Zach Shaur** chose to step down.

AT&T Retail – Open Grievances: Three unjust terminations regarding failed drug test, COVID absences, and alleged COBC misconduct (for arguing with a manager) are at the arbitration level – two of which have been approved by **CWA District 7** to go forward; **Other Notes:** At **CWA 7250 Area Vice-President (Retail) Larry Thompson**’s direction, the union lodged a formal complaint with the company over failure to communicate in a timely manner regarding schedule changes for the new iPhone launch – **if you have questions/issues with schedule changes get in touch**. Sadly, we are losing one of our excellent stewards **Nick Stryker** who is leaving AT&T. Thanks Nick!

AT&T Technicians – Open Grievances: None at this time **Other Notes:** See page 3 of Update



AT&T Call Center – Open Grievances: We have **THIRTEEN** open grievances in the Tower (can we still call it “the Tower”, in Bloomington?). **CWA 7250 Area Vice-President Michelle Richardson** has been very busy!

- 2 grievances from 2021(!) regarding pre-paid Alliance tuition are with the T&T office at the national level.
- 3 grievances from 2022 covering 4 remaining employees regarding denied WFH job accommodations for certified medical conditions are at the T&T office and will likely be appealed to the CWA President.
- 1 grievance from 2022 regarding COVID discipline for multiple members is at the national level with CWA District 7.
- 1 grievance from 2022 regarding unpaid work transporting equipment back to the office from WFH is at the T&T Office and being scheduled for arbitration.
- 1 grievance from 2022 regarding the unilateral cancelation of Christmas Eve half-day is at the T&T Office and being scheduled for arbitration.
- 1 grievance from 2023 over Final COBC Warning to union officer just heard 2nd step after a lengthy battle over the company turning over essential pertinent information.
- 1 grievance from 2023 over COVID discipline for a member that was told to stay home despite no symptoms (just a positive test) but then discipline for the absences.
- 1 grievance over the company’s ridiculous and illegal new requirements to use School Time (denied at the first step – scheduling second step hearing)
- 2 grievances over terminations - one regarding alleged falsification of application (for not including an arrest from 7 years prior); and one over allegations of sexual harassment. **Please Note: Anytime we have a situation or grievance where members are in conflict, we seek to make union representation available to all parties – and for those representatives to operate separately so all parties’ rights can be advocated for.**
- We also have two pending grievances over a seniority violation regarding moving a member from a team; and over not paying sick days for a member who had been officially notified they had paid time to use.

Other Notes: AVP Richardson plans to continue to raise concerns over conflicting information over the Fire Code cube/aisle build out, safety concerns over access to the breakroom and call center, how attendance discipline will run without a local Attendance Manager, and the illogical focus of Renz metrics on CAPH over A/R. **Please note:** While nothing is ever certain, after discussing with the T&T officers and staff, it seems very unlikely that AT&T will offer VTPs (or surplus us) while employment numbers stand right at the watermark of 2000 jobs – unless major hiring is done within the contract.

By-Laws Change and the Future of the Local E-Board

This week's Membership Meeting will decide whether to change our Local By-Laws so as to prevent DirecTV from losing its Area Vice-President and seat on the Local's Executive Board. Currently the By-laws state in **ARTICLE XIV Section 6 (d)** *"The Area Vice President(s) shall remain representing their unit(s) as long as there are 25 members to represent. If there are less than 25 members to represent at the time of the next election, the Election Committee will not fill the position."* And that is exactly the position that the DirecTV members are in now – like all of our units there has been a fall-off in numbers, first to under 50 (at which point the by-laws were changed to the current 25 threshold), now the unit is well under 25.

DirecTV Steward Nick Boerboom is attempting to deal with this problem by moving that the by-laws be changed again to reduce the threshold lower. His motion was approved at the last Membership Meeting – sending it to the September meeting for final approval (It must pass with 2/3 vote). This is an important decision to make in terms of the make-up of the Executive Board and representation for DirecTV members – please come to the meeting for the discussion, debate and vote.



Related to all this, **the Local Executive Board has struck a new committee** to try to deal with a number of questions and issues with how the Executive Board is structured: including how many should be on the Board; the threshold for units for representation; the unequal number of members under each AVP (despite the same pay); the salaries for officer and AVPs, how new units (big and small) will be represented. **Local President Kieran Knutson** has asked the Committee to come up with three proposals and to share each of those options strengths and weaknesses with the membership so we can have an informed debate and decision about how our Executive Board should be structured and compensated. **CWA 7250 Member-at-Large Dave Bennett** has volunteered to chair the committee, if you are interested in participating, please contact him dave.bennett@cwa7250.org or 612-743-8662.



RIP Dawn Baas Spangler

Our hearts go out to the family and friends of Dawn Baas, long-time AT&T worker and CWA 7250 member who retired in 2010 and passed away August 31st 2023. <https://www.washburn-mcreavy.com/obituaries/Dawn-BaasSpangler/#!/Obituary>

SOLIDARITY FOREVER!

CWA 7250 UNION UPDATE is sent out every QUARTER to all Local members and contacts, other CWA locals and other unions, and friends and allies in the labor movement and the community. The UPDATE is edited and produced by CWA 7250 Local 7250 President Kieran F. Knutson.