

LOCAL 1321  
DISTRICT COUNCIL 37  
AFSCME, AFL-CIO

# Bookshelf

AUGUST 2023



## 10th Anniversary of Our Fight Against Contracting Out

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## JOHN HYSLOP PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The union is integral to our work lives, with each and every member working collectively to build the strength of Queens Library Guild. The founders of Queens Library Guild, Local 1321 made sure our Union would include everyone who was legally eligible to join — custodians, clerks, and librarians. We continued that tradition into the 21st century and unionized IT, HR, Finance, PSD, Capital, and Purchasing workers. From 1969 until now, Queens Library Guild, Local 1321 has grown to understand that the union's power lies with each and every member.

To translate a union's power into action, union members vote to elect leaders to run the union. In our union, members have entrusted their leaders to represent them honestly, faithfully, and fairly, and with compassion, maturity, integrity, and strength. As leaders, we know that a member's trust is our greatest responsibility. We know that what we do for the members is always done on their behalf. We know that when a member comes to us with an issue, everything we discuss is done in confidence and privacy, the information we give is accurate, and actions taken are responsible and doable.

This trust extends to the library administration, who know your union leaders stand by our words and actions. When we advocate for our members, the administration knows that we are your voice, whether or not they do anything with that. When we tell the administration we will file a grievance, they know we will. When we tell them we will take a job action, they know we will. When we negotiate a settlement, they know we will abide by it.

In the last few months, Local 1321's Executive Board has worked with members from around the system to help make work lives better.

- We participated in the DC 37 and City economic contract negotiations that got us significant raises.
- We are working with the Administration to make the Central Library more accessible.

- We worked with Security to identify their issues and are pushing the Administration to resolve them.
- We worked with Hunters Point staff to come up with solutions to their sewage leak and broken elevator issues.
- We are working with our auditors to file the Local's IRS 990 form and provide all necessary paperwork for them to perform their audit.


We ensure our dues remittance from DC 37 are properly accounted for.

- We ensured that all the Local's monthly and quarterly IRS forms were properly filed.
- We ensured the Local followed proper AFSCME accounting standards and filed the necessary AFSCME forms.
- We restarted the Local's Scholarship Committee for members' children and grandchildren.
- We filed grievances to enforce policies and procedures, and contracts.
- Every day, we speak with members on a wide range of issues, allowing them to share feedback on actions we handle on their behalf.
- We worked with members throughout the system to ensure they receive the proper benefits.

Your Executive Board is constantly working to represent Queens Library Guild, Local 1321's members. We do it because you have elected us to serve **all** the members of Local 1321. We do it with honor, respect, integrity, compassion, honesty, maturity, realism, and strength. Our Union is the force that ensures our benefits, job security, and safety.







# System-Wide Closing Grievance

On May 7, 2023, the Administration closed the library at 3:30 p.m. for health and safety concerns of library employees because of extremely dangerous air quality. The Administration gave excused time to everyone who was working that day and members on approved leave were charged time from their leave banks. On June 14, 2023, Local 1321 filed a group grievance because the Administration violated their own May 2, 2018, directive stating that when we have a system-wide closure, anyone who is on approved leave is given excused time and not charged their leave banks.

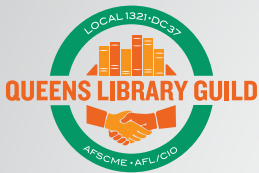
We greatly appreciate the Administration's compassionate decision to close the system and give everyone who was at work that day with excused time. However, we vehemently disagree with their decision to charge people who were on approved leave time from their leave banks. The administration is adamant that they are correct in making those employees use their time. We will see where this grievance takes us.



## Contract Bargaining

Recently, the administration and the local have picked up the pace of bargaining and made progress on the demands. There are tentative agreements on some, and a few that are important to Local 1321 members are still outstanding.

As in all bargaining, both sides may not agree with each others' demands, and in the end, we may not get everything we asked for. However, we will continue to push for and attempt to make the administration understand that our demands improve the work lives of the employees who are vital to making Queens Public Library thrive.



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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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**TRUSTEES:**  
Sharla Emery  
Abigail Goldberg  
Carol Rance-Fisher

# Health Care Bill Win a Step Forward to Rein in Hospital Costs

By MIKE LEE

DC 37 Communications Staff

On June 8, the New York City Council voted to approve the Healthcare Accountability & Consumer Protection Act. The law establishes the Office of Healthcare Accountability (OHA), which has the authority to oversee hospitals' actions in pricing health care procedures at their institutions and to end the opaque practice of how citywide hospital systems do their business.

The passage of the bill makes New York City the first municipality in the United States to establish an agency to oversee hospital pricing with authority and to develop a grading system for each hospital's transparency in revealing their health care costs.

"New Yorkers shouldn't have to struggle to understand the costs of health care services or go into debt to the lack of transparency," said New York City Council Member Julie Menin, who introduced the legislation. "The HACP Act will help protect patients from inconsistent hospital pricing and level the playing field for consumers in the health care industry."

DC 37 Executive Director Henry Garrido said inflated rates by some private hospitals are one of the biggest threats to the foundation of our health care system. At a City Hall rally announcing the bill on Feb. 23, Garrido said, "Fulfilling this basic need has become unaffordable due to certain hospital systems charging 300% above Medicare rates for the same quality procedures one would find at a less expensive hospital. We applaud Council Member Menin and her colleagues for their hard work in holding hospitals accountable."

Once established, the Office of Health care Accountability will be responsible for collecting data, monitoring hospital pricing trends, and issuing a report annually focusing on the variations among local hospital systems and prices charged to the City of New York for municipal workers' health care.

The latter is critical for District Council 37, who, along with several other New York City unions, formed the Coalition for Affordable Hospitals to combat exorbitant charges for medical procedures and related costs.

The pricing by the city's top five for-profit hospitals — New York Presbyterian, Northwell Health, Montefiore Medical Center, Mount Sinai Health System, and NYU Langone — has put financial pressure on union health and security funds.

In 2000, health insurance for New York City workers cost \$1.6 billion, including families' and retirees' coverage. However, by 2017, costs went up to \$6.3 billion. This year, health insurance for City workers exploded to an estimated \$11 billion. Hospital charges account for nearly 40% of all health care-related costs.

A report by the 32BJ Health Fund discovered that if New York City's pricing and spending patterns in health care matched the rest of the state, the City could be overpaying these five private hospital systems by as much as \$2 billion annually.

The agency's annual report will go to the State Attorney General, Mayor, and the City Council Speaker and will include breakdowns of major insurance providers, profit margins, employee counts, expenses, and executive salaries and bonuses.

"Creating this agency allows the City to leverage its purchasing power to create a better health care system," Menin said. "This will slow the excessive spending that has spiraled to more than 10% of the City's annual budget."

The City Council unanimously approved the Healthcare Accountability & Consumer Protection Act on June 8.

## Local 1321's New Shop Stewards

**Congratulations to Local 1321's DC 37 Delegate and South Jamaica CLM Chante Gaines, VP for Non-Librarian Professionals and IT and Central Library Specialist Lisa Soler, and East Elmhurst ACLM Brie Taylor for completing DC 37's Shop Stewards training course and receiving their Shop Stewards certificate.**

In their class, they learned about our rights as union members, and how to read and apply contracts, side letters, and policies and procedures in order to protect union members' rights. They learned what is and is not practicable and about not giving members false hope for something that cannot be done. They learned about our benefits, how to communicate with the Administration to resolve



# Customer Service Reps Shrinking in Number

As all Local 1321 members know, the administration is not hiring Customer Service Representatives. Branch staff are concerned about this because the Representatives' duties and responsibilities are integral to branch operations.

For many of us who have worked for the Library for a while, we know that every branch had many more Representatives than they do now. A lot of this is a function of technology, how customers access materials, and why they use libraries. This shift in how customers use our libraries is beyond the control of the Library. However, the method by which the Queens Public Library adapts to this shift is in our control.

One way is for the administration to continue to force staff to work out of title, causing more discontent, less efficiency, and work not being done. On the other hand, the administration could work with the union to create a more compassionate and efficient workflow that compensates workers for working out of title. This commonsense method of tackling this issue would improve productivity and streamline branch operations, including vacation scheduling.

Unfortunately, the administration has taken the latter position and is forcing Specialists and Supervisors to work out of title without extra compensation and direction. This is causing a lot of confusion and ill feelings in all branches. The Local is concerned about these developments and is exploring our legal options.

issues before they rise to the level of grievances, and how to communicate with fellow union members.

These classes develop strong leaders who are trusted advocates. They know our rights. If you have a question or an issue you should contact them and they can provide correct and accurate information.

We thank Chante, Lisa, and Brie who all took the time, while working full-time, to learn how to better serve and advocate for our fellow union members and make Local 1321 a stronger, better union.



# Central Accessibility

As we all know, Central Library is not fully accessible to staff and customers. On May 3, 2023, union members and their union representatives met with the administration to formally bring attention to the problems people with disabilities have with Central's accessibility.

At this meeting, we highlighted two important issues: insufficient evacuation plans for people who cannot navigate the stairs in an emergency, and doors that are not fully powered. We discussed these issues and potential solutions. Both sides stressed the need for both immediate and long-term solutions.

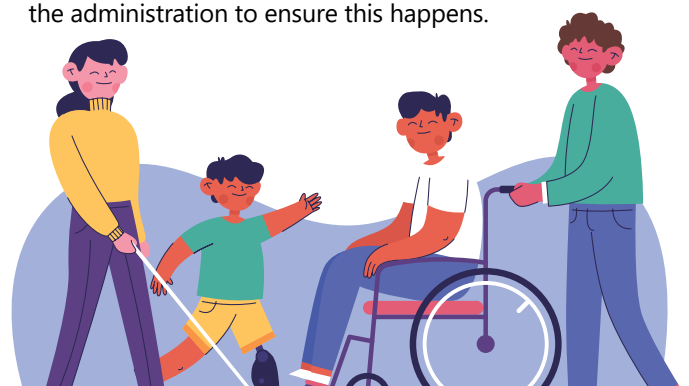
On June 5, we met again to continue the dialog. The Administration informed us that:

- The library has contracted with a consultant to study and advise the administration on how to make Central more accessible.
- The Library's Fire and Safety Officer is redesigning Central's evacuation plan to ensure everyone can get out safely.

We stressed the following:

- People who are most knowledgeable about Central's accessibility issues should be included early on in the process of creating an evacuation plan and the consultant's accessibility plan. These people will have unique insight into what people with disabilities and the Library will need.
- Given that any major renovations to Central will require time, the Library should explore more immediate and temporary solutions.

Both meetings were productive. Since then, we have continued our cooperative dialog to create intermediate and long-term solutions. The Library has a long way to go to make Central Library barrier free to everyone who comes to our door. Our union will continue to work with the administration to ensure this happens.





# 10th Anniversary of Our Fight Against Contracting Out

This fall marks the 10th anniversary of Local 1321's fight against the administration's attempt to contract out our union custodians.

In the summer of 2013, the administration announced that it would be contracting out custodial work at a number of branches, including Central, Flushing, and Kew Gardens Hills. This outrageous action was met with severe and swift condemnation by the local.

After much discussion by the Executive Board, Local 1321 created a publicity and legal campaign that involved DC 37, elected officials, and the membership. We immediately asked for labor-management meetings to explain this. We met with DC 37 to discuss our legal case and to help with publicity, and with members of the New York City Council's Queens delegation to inform them of what was happening. We started a social media campaign to publicize this, making sure that New York City knew. We issued press releases and spoke with reporters. We submitted Freedom of Information requests to obtain documents related to the custodial contracts.

The highlight of this campaign was the Local's rally with Scabby the Rat outside Central. That was a portentous occasion, as that morning, the VP of Custodial, Thomas Wynn, photographed Library's President/CEO Thomas Galante's "smoking deck." That image would make an appearance in Juan Gonzalez' first of many articles in the *Daily News*. Attendees spoke about the fear of losing a job, the importance of having our branches cleaned by library custodians, and the value of union jobs to the people of New York City. Thank you to everyone who came to Central on the day of the rat.

After months of pressure, and the removal of half the trustees and Galante himself, Local 1321 successfully stopped the contracting out of Queens Library custodians and forced the library to hire more custodians. We also forced the administration to drastically cut back the security contract and hire union security guards.

Queens Library Guild, Local 1321's successful campaign paved the way for the library to give more people decent union jobs with great benefits. This allowed the Library to hire custodians who are more accountable to the Library's employees and customers. The Administration's pathetic attempt to give our tax dollars to a private non-union company and undermine good union jobs was successfully derailed by the dedication, commitment, hard work, and solidarity of Local 1321 and DC 37.





# Security Department Crisis

## In Solidarity with our Security Department

Security is a concern for every public-facing Local 1321 member. To alleviate and mitigate that concern, Queens Public Library has a very competent Security Department responsible for protecting our customers and staff and instilling a sense of calm and security. Yet, when it comes to helping, protecting, and supporting the Security staff, Queens Public Library's Administration repeatedly fails.

Staff of the Security Department have had to contend with daily physical and verbal abuse, emotionally disturbed customers, de-escalating fights between customers, and other security concerns. They do this work without any documented directives because the Administration has failed to define rules dictating how Security Officers are supposed to engage with customers who are causing problems. In addition, the Administration has neglected to provide training, and no relief after any traumatic or problematic customer issues. The Security Officers feel abandoned and unsupported by the Library's administrators.

The Security Department's members met with union's leadership to convey to the Administration their concerns.

- The Library does not have a clear definition on what is, and is not, permitted when engaging with customers. When a customer assaults a Security Guard, they have no guidance on what to do.
- Customers who have exhibited extremely bad behavior, or are constantly violating library rules, do not face consequences that are commensurate with their bad behavior. As a result, Security is left to deal with customers who are emboldened to continue their bad behavior.
- These increasingly and constant abusive situations are taking a toll on the staff's physical and mental well being.
- Security staff have never received training on how to perform the many aspects of their job.

On April 5, 2023, on behalf of the Investigations and Security Department union members, Local 1321 Leadership contacted QPL's Administration to address the reported issues, and to meet with the Security Department to go over:

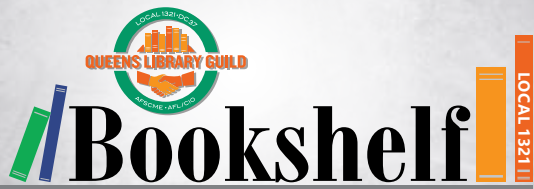
- Creating rules of engagement;
- Training;
- A more robust, library-wide standard for security, discipline, and banning; and
- A process for their mental health relief.

The Administration never responded. We reached out to them a few more times to no avail. Therefore, the unionized Investigations and Security Department staff felt it necessary to file a grievance on the Administration's failure to provide a safe and secure working environment.

To highlight the lack of support, on July 14, 2023, this Administration terminated one of Local 1321 Security Officers for trying to protect himself from assault by a customer. After being repeatedly verbally and then physically assaulted, the Security Guard defended himself. Each and every Queens Library Guild, Local 1321 member who is aware of the incident, is furious at the Library's Administration callous decision and disregard for the well-being and livelihood of our colleague and friend.

As it states in multiple languages on every library location door "EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE." That statement is our cornerstone philosophy which has benefited the millions of people who walk through our doors. Unfortunately, our Administration fails to support that statement because they cannot provide a safe, secure, and supportive work space for our security staff, customers, and staff.





**Queens Library Guild, LOCAL 1321**

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# Labor Day Parade

**SAT., SEPT. 9**

Join your fellow union members as we march on 5th Avenue. We will be congregating with DC 37 on West 44th Street between 6th Avenue and Broadway, at 10 a.m. It is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our union, New York City's union movement, and the union movement in general.

**West 44th St.**

**between 6th Ave. & Broadway**

**10 a.m.**

