

BALTIMORE FIRE OFFICER

LOCAL 964

--STAFF--

STEPHAN G. FUGATE -- TOM NOSEK

By and For the Professional Fire Officer

IN UNION

THERE IS STRENGTH

Volume , Issue

February/March 2010

From the Desk of the President

By Stephan G. Fugate

A new Mayor

By the time this newsletter arrives, we will have a new Mayor in the person of now Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake. His is not the time or place to discuss how it all came about, and it would be counterproductive to dwell on the past, so we'll just accept the reality of the matter and move forward. We have always enjoyed a very good relationship with our new Mayor, first as a Council member, then as Council President and we look forward to continuing that relationship to the benefit of our members as well as the citizens we are sworn to serve.

It is indeed encouraging to hear Mayor Rawlings-Blake express her support of our members and our Department. As the sixth Mayor I will have served under, she is surely the most positive in the regard and while I know actions speaks louder than words, I have confidence in her honesty and sincerity. Mayor Rawlings-Blake is assuming that office at the most difficult of times and having a new Mayor in place does not change the economic reality. We are quite literally in the middle of the budget process and how that all turns out will be something of a barometer for the future. Mayor Rawlings-Blake has been very outspoken in her support of our Department and I am cautiously optimistic.

Among the positive indicators, Mayor Rawlings-Blake has appointed both Bob Sledgeski and myself to her Transition Committee that will focus on Public Safety

and our first meeting was held on Wednesday, January 27th at the Mount Washington Conference Center. The work of the Transitions Committees is to be complete by early March, and details of the issues discussed as well as possible recommendations made will be reported upon in the next edition of this newsletter.

IAFF General Secretary Treasurer Vincent J. Bollon

As most of you likely know by now, IAFF General Secretary-Treasurer Vincent J. Bollon has retired from his principal officer position effective January 15, 2010 due primarily to health issues and his feeling unable to fully perform his duties and responsibilities on behalf of our 284,000 members in the U.S. and Canada. General Secretary-Treasurer Bollon was just re-elected to an unprecedented sixth term by acclamation at the 49th Bi-Annual Convention in August of 2008 and his term would not have expired until the 51st Bi-Annual Convention in August of 2012.

So well loved and respected is Mr. Bollon by everyone in the IAFF and virtually everyone in our nations' organized labor movements, he could easily have "mailed it in" for the remainder of his term and would likely have been re-elected by acclamation once again in 2012 so long as he was drawing a breath. His personal work ethic and his endless love for the IAFF, however, would not allow him to do any less than he has for fifty years as a member of the IAFF that began with his appointment to the FDNY.

In Mr. Bollon's heartfelt letter to the membership announcing his decision to retire, he chronicled his stellar career and that letter will be reproduced elsewhere in this edition, if space permits, so I'll not at-

tempt to elaborate. If space in this newsletter does not permit, however, we will post the entire letter on our web site for all to read. Either way, you can read it for yourself and I'm sure you'll agree that, even if you don't know Vinnie, you'll know that he's the very definition of professionalism and it has been a genuine honor and pleasure to have known him as well as I do.

I grant you that the reproduction of such a lengthy letter is somewhat unusual, but the fact of the matter is that it was Vinnie Bollon who almost single-handedly saved the IAFF from certain financial ruin and turned it into one of the most fiscally sound International Unions in ALL of organized labor. Surely such an accomplishment warrants whatever space it takes and we should all be eternally grateful for Vinnie's service and phenomenal success on our behalf.

The rather sudden retirement of Mr. Bollon with more than two years remaining in the current term, required that a replacement be named and though the event was unprecedented in the ninety-two year history of the IAFF, the IAFF Constitution and By-Laws provides for a process. The replacement of a Principal Officer is essentially by majority vote of the sixteen member Executive Board with any one or more of the sixteen Vice-Presidents eligible for nomination. Again, this event was unprecedented and there is a great deal of latitude given to the General President in terms of process. With the advice of IAFF General Counsel Tom Woodley, General President Schaitberger decided to convene a small election committee comprised of three members from the sixteen member Convention Election Committee which I serve on as Chairman.

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President's Desk..... *...from page 1*

General President Schaitberger selected myself as Committee Chair, Ted Vanderbeek of the Minnesota Professional Fire Fighters, and Brad Grainger of Local 2494, Ft. McMurray, Alberta to function as the small Election Committee and a Special Executive Board meeting was convened in Washington, DC on Wednesday, January 21, 2010.

The election was contested with Vice-President Danny Todd of the 14th District and Vice-President Thomas H. Miller of the 8th District being nominated. I am not certain it would be proper for me to disclose the vote count and perhaps that will be done in an official IAFF publication but suffice it to say that Vice-President Miller was elected to succeed Mr. Bollon by a significant majority of the 284,660 votes cast.

My personal congratulations to newly elected General Secretary-Treasurer Miller whom I have had the pleasure to know for many years. As luck would have it, however, Mr. Miller hails from the Indianapolis Fire Department and is a rabid Colts fan. Yes, THOSE Colts. The Colts that were stolen at 2:00am, March 29, 1984 in the dark of a snowy night from Baltimore. But hey, who remembers that?

In any event, we look forward to working with General Secretary-Treasurer Miller and welcome him to Washington with the offer to do anything we can do to assist so long as doesn't regale us with tales of Peyton Manning. Finally, it was at the Chicago Convention in 2000 when Tom Miller was first elected as 8th District Vice-President with the campaign slogan, including signs plastered throughout the hotel, "It's Miller Time", so how bad can the guy be?

Grievances, Claim of Unfair Labor Practice

Having gone through the painful process of negotiating the "Addendum Agreement" that resulted in the imposition of furlough days for ALL of our members, the one thing that was repeatedly stated was that the "pain" would be shared by ALL and that NO ONE would get through the difficulty unscathed. At the ratification meetings for our members in late October, though the FOP Units had not yet reached a similar agreement, we passed that assurance along to our members with the confidence that

we were not being lied to or otherwise manipulated.

Our Addendum Agreement went to the Board of Estimates on November 18, 2009 and effectively codified not only the furlough day resolution for FY'10, but also "closed-out" our MOU for FY'11 as well. The urgency and rush to closure imposed upon the Fire Locals was intense and though I would not say that it skewed the process, it certainly made for a very uncomfortable process. Understanding and having lived with the date-certain closure for traditional MOU negotiations, we can accept deadlines but never before had so much pressure been brought to bear for finalization.

Among the issues raised in the weeks and months to follow was why the FOP Units were allowed MUCH more time allegedly in the face of the very same economic calamity. To say that there were two very disparate sets of rules would be an understatement and a great deal of the credibility previously enjoyed by the City has been lost forever. In addition to the disparity in process, the disparity in result is not only unacceptable, but absolutely appalling.

I'm not trying to, nor do I want to try to, make our case here but as factual detail becomes common knowledge, our members will be expecting answers. The "Addendum Agreement" relating to the FOP Units falls WAY short of the City's claim to the sharing of the pain by ALL and is a virtual case-study in deceptive bargaining.

Coincident with the City and the FOP reaching their resolve to the "Addendum Agreement", was the final settling of their MOU's (Units I & II) for FY'10 which raises yet additional concern and the basis for yet another grievance. In short, significant segments of the FOP bargaining units gained an economic benefit in the form of lesser annual hours worked that we believe is in violation of the "Parity" provisions of Article 13 for both 734 and 964.

The bottom-line is that on January 28, 2009, three separate grievances were filed on behalf of "ALL Members and ALL Ranks" at the level of the Labor Commissioner (Step four) and those three claims should proceed rather quickly through the process likely leading to arbitration in one or more of the issues cited. It is indeed unfortunate that one of the very first major labor issues newly installed Mayor Rawlings-Blake will have to deal with in-

volves issues not of her making, but as we've always said, the only constant in Labor/Management relations in the City is the Union Locals and we have an obligation to act on behalf of our members without consideration of any "changing of the guard".

Variable Annuity Debate

We all know (or should know) that benefits provided by our retirement system does not include and never has included a guaranteed, post-retirement Cost-Of-Living-Adjustment (COLA) What we do have instead is a somewhat unusual structure that provides post-retirement increases based upon the investment returns for a given fiscal year that we know as the Variable Annuity. Started in 1983, this structure takes a literal "snapshot" of fiscal year investment returns and if the overall returns exceed 7.5%, the process of calculating an increase commences. The first step in the process is determining the "pool" of assets to be used for calculating the benefit increase which is to identify all returns from 7.5% to 10%, and half of all returns over 10%.

As an aside, it is important to keep in mind that the accounting structure created in 1983, in affect, created two "sides" of total system assets; the active member "side" and the retired member "side". The first step above identifies only the "excess returns" attributable to the retired member "side" of the total Fund and in 1983, the retired member "side" of the total Fund was something close to thirty percent of the total Fund. The remaining "excess earnings" attributable to the active member "side" of the fund were retained within the Fund and with the active member "side" of the Fund representing seventy percent of the total Fund, a significant portion of the "excess earnings" were retained within the fund.

The traditional pension fund theory of "banking" the excess returns in the good years to off-set shortfalls in the bad years was slightly skewed beginning in 1983 but the approximate 70/30 split made it tolerable at least at the start. In the twenty-seven years since, however, the Fund assets attributable to the retired "side" of the fund have slowly but surely crept upward to ac-

count for nearly one hundred percent of the total Fund. That imbalance now means that nearly all of the “excess earnings” from good years is paid out in additional benefits with very little held in reserve to offset low or negative returns in bad years.

But back to the immediate point in debate; once that “pool” of assets has been established, actuarial calculations are used to determine the cost of a 1% benefit increase. Among the factors considered are current average benefits of retirees and beneficiaries; mortality tables; and, perhaps most importantly, the projected return on the reinvestment of the excess earnings to match the payout stream of newly created liabilities. If it is determined that each 1% increase of benefits will cost \$15MM and the total “pool” of money available is \$45MM, the increase will be 3% across the board.

Historically, the assumed rate of return on the “reinvestment” of the “pool” of excess returns has been 6.8%. It has been assumed that the fixed income market traditionally used to “immunize” or guarantee the pay-out stream of newly created liabilities will return at least 6.8% and if that holds true, all is well. Following the four year period of NO Variable Annuity increases (Jan. 1, 2001 thru January 1, 2004) the positive returns in FY’04 allowed for an increased to be paid on January 1, 2005.

In that first year following the four year drought, the Board of Trustees were advised that the historic 6.8% return was not attainable in the then existing fixed income market. The Board opted to utilize available reserves to make up the minimal shortage in that first year and there was no diminution of benefit. In the three years to follow, however, the difference between the 6.8% assumption and the reality of the markets did not allow for another short-term fix and the Board was faced with an unprecedented decision. The Board could have either pretended to be able to earn 6.8%, award additional benefits at that level and chance a significant shortfall that could have eventually resulted in a benefit REDUCTION; or, the Board could have acted prudently and award the benefit that could be guaranteed, given the reality of the market. The Board opted for the latter and that decision (for three successive years) is now subject to challenge.

In FY’05, the Board utilized an assumed rate of return of 5.0%; in FY’06, the Board utilized an assumed rate of return of 5.4%; and in FY’07, the Board utilized an assumed rate of return of 5.25%. Why? Because that was the nearly risk-free, virtually guaranteed return available in the fixed income market for each year and to assume a higher rate of return would have placed additional benefits granted in jeopardy and, we believe, been a violation of our fiduciary responsibilities. The bottom line to ALL of the above is that the Board of Trustees opted NOT to award benefit increases that we KNEW could not be paid for in the long term.

One of the results of City Council legislation in early ’09 that would have dramatically changed the current Variable Annuity structure was the highlighting of the undefended status of the Plan in general and a subsequent review by the Unions’ actuary revealed significant structural issues, and a heightened awareness of the potential problems. The Union’s engaged an independent, local law firm (Saul/Ewing) to review the status of the Plan and principal in the preliminary findings is their view that the Board of Trustees may have violated standing law (Article 22 of the Code) by using an assumption rate less than 6.8% in fiscal years ’05, ’06, & ’07.

One approach to resolution of this particular issue is the filing of a law suit against the Board of Trustees to demand the marginally higher Variable Annuity payments though the statute of limitations have expired for FY’05 & ’06. Another approach, which I personally prefer, is to agree upon the use of an independent authority (arbitrator, mediator) to assess the issues and recommend a remedy but, to date, neither has happened and your guess is as good as mine at this point.

For the record; given that I am the Local President as well as the elected Active Member Trustee and Board Chair of the F & P, I am clearly in a position of conflict at this point and I have removed myself completely from the “Union” side of the debate. I have appointed Mike Campbell and Sam Darby to fill that void and they will be representing the interests of the Union all the way to final resolution.

I will be MORE THAN HAPPY to address the concerns of anyone in the matter to the extent that I can and I am confident that the issue will be resolved appropriately.

All I ask is that you not speculate or repeat unfounded rumors or misinformation. I can be contacted almost any time at **410.908.0199** or at sgfugate@comacst.net

I will close this segment out with my core view of the entire debate and that is: the Board of Trustees acted with the professional advice and consent in the interests of ALL Plan participants, not just our retirees and beneficiaries. The Board consists of NINE members, including two current retirees, and each vote in question was UNANIMOUS. Once again, the bottom line is that the Board would not (and WILL NOT) place ANY portion of the Plan in jeopardy in the awarding of benefits that cannot be paid for and guaranteed.

GBC Pension System Review

Lest anyone think that the Variable Annuity issue is the only issue facing Plan participants, please keep in mind that the Greater Baltimore Committee is (as of this writing on January 28, 2010) less than two weeks away from making public the findings of their complete review of the Plan. You think THIS article was long???

From the Desk of the 1st Vice President

By George E. Jones

To all of our active and retired members, I would like to start my very first news letter with a sincere thank you for your support during my campaign for First Vice President. I would like to thank Michael Waldner for his support also. Mike encouraged my run against him and gave me direction during the campaign. Even though I have been in the position for a very short period of time, President Fugate, Second Vice President Campbell, Recording Secretary Nosek and Recording Secretary Treasure Hatoff have been nothing short of supportive, helpful and encouraging. I would also like to thank a friend and a former deceased member of Local 734, Mr. Lonnie D. Jackson, who at the start of my career encouraged me to get involved in the Union and stay involved. As of this moment, I have been assigned by President Fugate to

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handle member grievances. This may seem small to some of you, but it is very important work. Also, I have been with President Fugate as legislation was proposed to end fire house closings, and will continue to follow him in his daily activities and meetings, asking questions, and learning as I go. I would also like to continue the Heart Lung Scan started by my predecessor, as I feel that is an important program for all of us. In January, I attended my first Metropolitan Baltimore Council AFL-CIO Unions Conference in Atlantic City New Jersey, where again, the Executive Board guided me and introduced me to the "movers and shakers" that support our Union and make it great. I would like to take a minute to wish in coming Mayor Mrs. Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, knowledge, power and

guidance in her new position. At this moment she appears to be supportive of Fire Department issues, as she has visited Walbrook Station, and had open discussion with the members. I would also like to extend best wishes to out-going Mayor Shelia Dixon. Even though there were many differences between the Dixon Administration and the Fire Department, we are adults. To Lieutenant Hughes and the other members that were injured battling the East Ave. fire, I wish them a speedy recovery from their injuries, and to all the members a reminder to always practice safety first. Finally, even though my first news letter appears to be small in stature compared to the others, for those that know me, I am direct and to the point, and as you will see, my actions speak louder than words (type).

From the Desk of the 2nd Vice President

By Mike Campbell

I hope everyone enjoyed their Holidays and spent some quality time with their families. The Campbell family was blessed to have both children home for Christmas and New Years. Soon after, our son Jason took a road trip to Colorado where he will be stationed at Fort Carson. By the time you receive this though Jason will be serving our country in Afghanistan. Please say a prayer for him and all the men and women who are protecting our freedoms!

Locals 964 and 734 have filed joint grievances along with an Unfair Labor Practice concerning the disparate treatment that the Fire Locals received as opposed to the FOP with regards to our Addendum Agreement. I'm sure Steve will elaborate so I won't repeat what has already been written then to state that I don't feel we were treated as fairly as the FOP! As many may or may not be aware the F&P Board of Trustees is being questioned by the Active and Retired members of both Fire Locals and the FOP as to assumption rates used for calculating retiree raises in FY06, 07 & 08. Steve, as President of this Local and the Chairman of the Trustees has recused himself from the Unions perspective in this discussion and has appointed me to represent the Fire Officers if legal action is taken against the Trustees. I have chosen Lt. Sam Darby, E8 to join in the discussions and to be an integral part if this proceeds further. At this time there has not been legal action taken, but please keep abreast of the web site for updates. We, as a Department are seeing the constant eroding of fire protection to the citizens of Baltimore along with the safety of our members and I for one don't see it coming to an end anytime soon. I don't need to remind each of you that we cannot keep operating as we have done in the past without the proper resources. Take a second to look around when on the scene to see if you have the necessary resources to begin fire fighting activities. Unless there is a report of people trapped you may have to wait. With that said, we will be in constant contact with Mayor Rawlings-Blake about seeking the proper funding for the BCFD, but in the meantime please make sure that

Baltimore City Fire Officers IAFF Local 964 **Annual Retirees Dinner/Dance**

April 25, 2010, 2-6 pm

UAW hall, O'Donnell and Oldham Sts

Tickets \$35

Hot Buffet, open bar, live music and dancing

*Atlantic city, NJ vacation raffle
proceeds benefit the VEBA fund*

Honoring the 2009 Retirees

Lt Richard Sarudy Jr.	Capt Gerard Shedlock
Lt James Rubeling Jr.	Lt John Jones Jr.
Capt Rodney Williams	Lt Michael Johnson
Lt Joseph Thomas	Lt Michael Jenson
Lt William Webster	Capt James Bryant
Captain Harry Melrose	Lt Anthony Ross
Capt Brian LaHatte	Capt William Schulze

For tickets and raffle chances:

Lt Thomas Nosek	Lt Frank Schlosser
410 396 9205 @ T3	410 396 6204 @ E4
410 499 5441 cell	
410 638 2231 home	

you go home the same as you began your shift! As a newly elected Vice-President of the Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland, (what we refer to as the State Association) one of my duties will be keeping abreast of Legislation that is moving through the General Assembly in Annapolis and reporting back to you on items that affect us. This year the top priority of the PFFMD is increasing the cancers that are in our Worker's Compensation Presumptive Law and also including Occupational Diseases. We will be in touch with all of the politicians who can assist us as a sponsor or who is a Committee Chair Person to get the legislation moving. If you are in touch with any politicians it wouldn't hurt to put a bug in their ear that this legislation will be forthcoming. When I have more information I will place it on our web site. Some members have had an issue with MECU since the implementation of their updated computer system. If you have issues please call 410-752-8313. We are being told that the bills were sent in error.

All promotions are moving ahead smoothly. I have been questioned about possible layoffs and demotions and how that could have an impact on our members should the Fire Department have to take another significant financial hit. This is all new territory for us, but we are looking into all the possible outcomes and if we get to that point will look to at protecting our folks, first and foremost.

Please keep Lt. Larry Hughes and his lovely wife Doris along with the Hughes family in your prayers! Also keep the family of Retired Lt. Dan Eader in your prayers along with Ct. Tom Geisler who recently lost his mom.

If PHASE 1 of the snow emergency is in effect by noon on the day of a Union meeting, then that evening's meeting is cancelled!

There was some confusion when Great-West took over for ING in managing our Deferred Compensation Plan. Letters were mailed out in December which showed a zero balance in everyone's account while the transition took place. The monies were still there though. It seems that some of our members just now received this letter and that has caused some understandable angst among them. I cannot explain the screw up in the delayed letter delivery, but I would

encourage our members to contact Deferred Comp. to put yourself at ease. You can log onto the website @ www.baltimoredeferredcomp.com or call 1-877-233-2748.

If you have questions or concerns contact the Deferred Compensation Plan Office at 201 E. Baltimore Street, Suite 120 or call 410-332-0809 or 1-877-233-2748. Their hours are Monday thru Friday from 0800 to 1700 hrs. Please keep abreast by logging on the Fire Officers website at www.iafflocal964.org.

Health Care

If you have not received your insurance cards as yet, please contact me.

Safety and Health

I attended the Safety/Health meeting on 1/21/2010. Items discussed were as follows: The FD has members field testing a work boot that if approved will be FD issued. We have some concerns and are working that out with the Safety Office and the Chief of Department. I would like to acknowledge Councilwoman Mary Pat Clarke for all of her hard work in assisting with the effort of getting E31's fire house rehabbed. Councilwoman Clarke has played an integral part in attempting to secure the funding needed along with rallying support to get the station open by April of 2010. Please contact Captain John Parker, E31 if you know of anyone who would like to help this project move forward.

Make sure that you e-mail the Safety Office at (FDSO@baltimorecity.gov) if you have any safety related issues along with contacting me. If you are e-mailing Health and Safety Officer Bill Jones, you must e-mail William H. Jones, not William Jones! You must also continue sending in Special Reports as is policy. The next meeting is scheduled for 2/17/10. Contact me with any issues. **BE SAFE!**

President's Club

If you have an idea for next years President's Club item please e-mail me and if you need a size change I need to be made aware of this prior to the order going in. Thanks! Retirees cannot contribute to the Presidents Club by way of dues deduction, but can still donate the full amount of \$100.00 by way of cash or check! Please make checks out to: Local 964 PAC Fund! The PAC Fund is our most important tool

to have the **local** politicians listens to our concerns. The Fund can **only** be used for Local and State politicians and **cannot and will never be used** for Federal politicians, (President, Senator etc.) If you contribute \$4.00 or more a pay you are automatically included in the Presidents Club. Thanks to those who have contributed and to those who haven't, contact me if you need a dues deduction card.

As always, keep your Beneficiaries up to date and don't hesitate to call or e-mail me at any time.

Cell -443-629-0216

Work -410-396-5682

E-mail: captain16@hotmail.com

Worlds to twirl by...

I been warped by the rain,
driven by the snow
I'm drunk and dirty, don't ya know,
And I'm still willin'
Out on the road late last night,
Seen my pretty Alice in every head light
Alice, Dallas Alice

I've been from Tucson to Tucumcari
Tehachapi to Tonapah
Driven every kind of rig
that's ever been made
I've driven the back roads
so I wouldn't get weighed
If you give me: weed, whites, and wine
And you show me a sign
I'll be willin' to be movin'

Little Feat

Union Memorial Heart/Lung Scan and Wellness Testing program

- heart/lung scans for union members only are offered on Tuesday and Thursday only from 1100-1200 hrs, 1-877-744-3278, cost \$75

- heart/lung scan and wellness assessment for union members only are offered only on Tuesdays from 1200 1400 hours, for wellness assessment info call Rebecca Winch 410- 544- 2167 , cost for combined tests, \$150

- Union Memorial also has heart/lung scans through their community outreach program for the general public on Saturdays only 1-877-744 3278, cost \$75

From the Desk of the Recording Secretary

By *Tom Nosek*

We the membership and Union officers are constantly facing new challenges and changing political landscapes. Mayor Sheila Dixon resigned and on February 4th, City Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake will become Baltimore's 59th Mayor. Mayor Rawlings-Blake and the labor unions have a mutual respect and the new mayor has pledged her support of the Fire Department. However with that said the City, State of Maryland and the country as a whole are still in a recession, we will need to work closely with the new Mayor. The new Mayor and City Council must be supportive in providing the BCFD the resources it needs to do the job safely and continue to provide the service the citizens have expected in the past, NO CUTS!! Just to jog everyone's memory the outgoing Mayor had a poll taken and the *Baltimore Sun* reported on October 16, 2009 that 69% of the citizens rated the BCFD as the number one city agency with, "fire protection excellent or good".

The *F&P pension* is in new territory with the GBC report due out in the next two weeks, the Unions paid for Saul Ewing report soon to be released and concerns about the Variable Annuity. I only ask in the coming weeks for members to be objective, listen carefully, be respectful and call your union reps before passing on wrong information or rumors. We may have to defend ourselves in the media and public's eye. However with that said our retirees and us the active members must be vocal and persistent in protecting our pension. Our retirees earned the well deserved pension with their years of dedicated service and the current membership is due the pension promised by enacted legislation!!

Installation of officers held on January 18 was a fantastic night, many of our members were present for the swearing in of the newly elected officers of Local 964. Thanks to IAFF 4th District Vice President Bill "Mr. nice guy" Taylor for administering the oath of office to the newly elected First VP George Jones, Trustee Tom Tosh and yours truly as Recording Secretary. Thanks to my BROTHER TIM for prepar-

ing the excellent chow we enjoyed that night. Thanks big brother!!!

My get well wishes go out to Lt Larry Hughes for a healthy recovery for the injuries he sustained on the N. East Ave fire a few days ago. The same goes to the other members injured that morning, but Larry received the most severe injuries, but to all hope you are up and about quickly. I know that T3 was closed the night before (my shift) and they were the first due Truck on that Fire Box, but it is my understanding that the closing was not a factor in the events that occurred. I still call for the rotating closures to cease immediately, especially with the winter months upon us!! We can staff MAC units but not suppression units, *hey headquarters, stop the MAC'S and put suppression units back in service, this time of year you are more likely to be killed in a fire than by the common cold!*

Local 964's annual retiree dinner/dance honoring the 2009 retirees will be held on Sunday, April 25 from 2-6 pm at the UAW hall, Oldham and O'Donnell Sts. Tickets are \$35 which includes dinner, open bar, dancing and presentations to the retirees. We also will be drawing the annual VEBA raffle prize, this year's prize is a 3 night stay at the Tropicana hotel in Atlantic City, NJ. The VEBA fund needs an influx of dollars to continue providing benefits to the membership. NOTICE, we no longer have the monthly cash flow from the bingo operation. We were blessed with such operation

run by Bob Hatoff and Frank Reisenfelder, but such has run its course mostly due to the economy. Each member both active and retired will be receiving (3) five dollar raffle tickets in the mail after February 15. PLEASE make the effort to sell these raffle tickets so we can bolster the VEBA fund.

Local 964 has 334 members who enjoy the membership of this great UNION. You the members deserve the right to vote, to be notified to issues of interest and have their voices heard. Recently we have had motions made with the philosophy of fast tracking (special orders of business). The local purposely has two meetings a month so the entire membership has the opportunity to attend union meetings. This enables every member to be able address union officers, hear privileged information and have their voice/vote heard. In the future hopefully all motions will continue with the two meeting process so the entire membership can participate.

In closing please make the effort to attend the annual retiree dinner/dance on April 25.

To the membership it is true and I can not lie to the members that I represent, yes I was locked up and will be in jail until March 3, I need your help to set bail, please help free me go to www.joinMDA.org/baltimore2010nosek5/ thanks Tom

Social night will be March 24 from 7-11pm, watch for flyers and notices in the near future.

Baltimore City Fire Officers Union Hall for Rent 1020 S. Linwood Ave. In the heart of Canton Square!!

- small parties
- weddings
- showers
- birthdays
- business meetings
- etc.

The hall is currently not handicap accessible, no kitchen facilities. Capacity 100 plus, two flat screen televisions, bar, ice provided.

If interested call Tom Nosek 410 499 5441, or any Eboard member.

From the Desk of the Secretary-Treasurer

By Anita Hatoff

I would like to start off by wishing everyone a Happy New Year, Let's hope 2010 is as wonderful as we all want it to be.

I want to congratulate George Jones on his new position as 1st Vice President. I look forward to working with you. I also want to congratulate Tom Tosh for his win as a trustee. I also look forward to working with you. Tom Nosek was re-elected as Recording Secretary and I'm sure he will continue to do the great job he has always done.

With new people coming in it also means we have to say goodbye to others. Mike Waldner became a good friend to me. In the beginning we didn't agree on much and I'm not sure that changed, but we agreed to disagree. It was nice knowing that even if we were on opposite sides of an issue we would still be friends. He and his wife, Kelly, were very kind to me and my son. These are the things I will remember. I will miss seeing you at the hall. Everyone out there should thank Mike when they see him. He was instrumental in getting the heart and lung scan program up and running. Anyone who hasn't utilized the program should. IT CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE! Mike I wish you and Kelly all the best in everything you do!!

Times are tough for everyone, but we need your help. With the bingo operation ending on 12/31/08 we need to come up with other options to help boost our VEBA fund. If you have any ideas for fund raisers please contact me or any E-Board member. Remember that any idea is worth hearing. Fourteen years ago when someone suggested bingo they probably thought it was a good idea, but I don't think they realized just how good of an idea it was. It lasted over 13 years and was a wonderful help to our VEBA.

Winter is upon us so everyone be safe at work and at home. Spend as much quality time as you can with those you love.

REMINDER

The Union Meeting that would have been scheduled for March 15th will be held on March 22nd instead.

ATTENTION MEDICARE ELIGIBLE RETIREES

The City of Baltimore will offer a new prescription drug plan to its Medicare eligible retirees and their Medicare eligible dependents. The new plan, called the **Baltimore City Medicare RxX Plan** is a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan and will become effective **April 1, 2010**.

If you are a retiree that is over 65 and not entitled to Medicare Part A, this change does not affect you, you will remain in the Express Scripts plan that you currently have.

The new prescription plan will be available to all Medicare eligible retirees and their dependents that qualify for Medicare Part A and/or are enrolled in Medicare Part B. If eligible, you and your dependent will be automatically enrolled into the Baltimore City Medicare Rx Plan, effective April 1, 2010. Once enrolled you will receive a new prescription ID card to take to your local retail pharmacy.

The Baltimore City Medicare Rx Plan offers several key advantages:

- Retirees who qualify for Low Income Subsidies (as defined by Social Security) will be eligible for reduced prescription co-pays
- The City's plan will offer a richer benefit than most Medicare D plans with no "donut-hole" design which requires you to pay additional expenses.
- You will not be charged a monthly premium like other Medicare Part D Plans available to you.
- The new plan offers 90-day drug supplies at retail in addition to the mail order option.

The City of Baltimore will be conducting several retiree information sessions throughout Baltimore City and the surrounding counties. Medicare eligible retirees and their Medicare eligible dependents will be notified of the locations, dates and times of the retiree information sessions.

At these sessions the Employee Benefits Division staff will be available to answer any of your questions and help you understand your new plan, the copay changes and how they will affect you and your Medicare eligible dependent. You are encouraged to attend one of the meetings to get a full understanding of your options and how the new prescription plan will affect you.

If you are unable to attend one of the meetings, and you have questions about the new plan, contact one of the Baltimore City Medicare Rx Plan Specialists at (410) 396-1780, Monday – Friday, 8:30 am – 4:30 p.m. EST.

Tired and Retired

By Bob Hatoff

Well fans it's 2010 and we've made it through another year. What bothers me is that it keeps getting harder. I've had all these years to practice, but it's still not easy. The one thing I have in my favor is no matter how bad my condition, I'm in better shape than the Fire Dept.

Those of you in my age group like to think about the good old days. So sit back, relax and let's reminisce.

1. We had a book of rules you could carry in your pocket and we all knew the difference between right and wrong, so there were very few problems. Now there are several volumes of MOP's and you need a station wagon to carry them. Every rule is explained in minute detail. Yet every week we hear about the latest scandal.

2. We had second line apparatus that had to be crank started, but we made it work. None of it could hold a candle to the present equipment. Maybe that's why it keeps getting harder and harder to find the new ones.

3. The work hours were much longer and the pay was only a fraction of today's salary. Yet it was fun to go to work and we managed to raise families.

4. A bedroom fire was handled with an engine and truck. The same fire today calls for 5 engines, 2 trucks and 2 chiefs. With another engine and truck if the fire is deemed a worker. That's why I can't understand closing fire companies.

Note: I'm not putting down our active brothers and sisters so please don't get mad at me. Today's fires are just as hot as yesterdays. My only regret is we didn't know how good we were. If we did we would have asked for more money.

This month Janice and I celebrate our 51st anniversary, which I'm reluctant to think about. We also celebrate our great granddaughters first birthday, which lights up our lives and makes the anniversaries more tolerable.

It's time to wrap up this column. You can still reach me at 1805 Greencastle Dr, Balto., MD 21237 or 410-866-3235.

P.S. Due to the bad economy cash donations are down. If you can help please remember me!

Sick & Injured

Al Herson is doing good after a knee replacement.

Mario Gugliotta had cancer surgery on 12/28. Everything went well and he's home.

Dick Cobo was in rehab for a month after suffering a stroke. He's doing okay.

Tom Whalen is in the hospital.

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