

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

The Official Union Newsletter – "The Word to the Wise"

Number 12 – March 25, 2021



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NEW WORK: M.E.B.A. LOCKS UP ANOTHER SHORESIDE UNIT

The M.E.B.A. has again made tangible gains in its pursuit of new diverse opportunities fitting the skillset of our membership after the Union inked a contract late last week with another shoreside employer. M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac and Atlantic Coast V.P. Jason Callahan closed on an agreement with Philadelphia Ship Services (PSS), a marine repair company that will put project engineers under M.E.B.A. contract for covered employment. These are permanent positions as well as rotary jobs which initially will encompass approximately a half a dozen positions with room for expansion. The company signed directly onto our Pension, MPB, Medical, 401k, JEC and Training Plans in the agreement that runs through 2032 and secures M.E.B.A. as the exclusive representative for labor.

PSS is a full service mobile marine repair company supporting US and foreign-flag vessels worldwide. Recent projects have been completed in Japan, Greece, Oregon, California, and New York. In addition to repairs, PSS also offers technical management services to assist customers with machinery inspections, drydock periods and owners' representation during major machinery re-fits.

Upon completion of the new MOU with the Union, PSS Project Engineer Chris Grupp expressed his delight to be associated with a first-class Union of highly skilled professionals and noted that the company is "looking forward to working with M.E.B.A. for decades to come."

This new work is part of ongoing M.E.B.A. efforts to pursue new initiatives and job opportunities for our highly-skilled membership both at sea and ashore. In the last few months, the Union has also finalized agreements with facilities operation and maintenance company Eco-Alpha; reached agreement with marine and industrial repair company BluePoint Engineering LLC (through American Crewing Service, LLC); inked a new contract with Patriot to supply dayworking engineers to MAN Technical Services (MAN) shoreside facilities; and made excellent headway on a series of other opportunities and initiatives that will benefit our membership.

You can learn more about Philadelphia Ship Services by visiting their website at www.phillyshipperservices.com Resumes should be sent to technical@phillyshipperservices.com while cc'ing ACVP Jason Callahan at jcallahan@mebaunion.org

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS BEGIN RETURNING TO IN-PERSON FORMAT

After almost a full year, membership meetings at most of the M.E.B.A. Union halls will return to an in-person format beginning in April. Continued vaccinations and membership adherence to strong Union hall COVID protocols will allow meetings to resume at 8 of the 13 halls during next month's meeting week (April 5-9). The Union is taking a phased approach, as safe operation allows, to restoring full operation of the Union halls and offices to our membership. Even after the Union halls are able to restore operations to pre-pandemic levels, the District Executive Committee would like to maintain an avenue where members onboard ship - and those living far from a Union hall - can still participate in an informational meeting in an online forum.

April's in-person meetings will take place at Boston, the Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School (CMES), Honolulu, Houston, Norfolk, Oakland, Seattle and Tampa.

Five Union halls will retain the Zoom-only format (for the time-being) for the April meetings. They include Charleston, Jacksonville, L.A., New Orleans and NY/NJ.

Attendees of the Zoom meetings should confirm their attendance by email (at least 24 hrs. in advance of the meeting) with the appropriate official. Once your status is confirmed, a Zoom link will be emailed before the meeting.

For the in-person meetings, "walk-ins" are permitted, however those planning to attend should still email the appropriate hall official in advance, as possible, for hall planning purposes. Participants at in-person meetings will be required to observe CDC guidelines including mask usage and social distancing.

An additional notice about the April membership meetings with further specifics and contact information will be emailed to members, applicants and retirees (with email addresses on file with Headquarters) on Monday, March 29.

APL TO CHANGE OUT GUAM WITH YOUNGER VESSEL

APL Maritime, Ltd. announced it plans to replace the feeder vessel APL GUAM with a younger, more versatile container ship in May. The CMA CGM HERODOTE, currently under Malta flag, is scheduled to raise the Stars and Stripes in mid-May in Pusan and join APL's Guam Saipan Express Service. The crew of the GUAM will quarantine in Pusan according to Republic of Korea protocols and join the HERODOTE around May 15th before the reflag. M.E.B.A., MM&P, SIU, SUP and MFOW mariners will continue to crew the vessel under the existing agreement. The HERODOTE is expected to assume the Maritime Security Program chit from the GUAM. Built in 2007, the replacement ship is 6 years younger than the outgoing ship which will be deployed into the CGA CGM international fleet.

NEW LABOR-FRIENDLY DOL SECRETARY IS ON THE JOB

The Senate confirmed 53-year old Marty Walsh as the nation's new Secretary of Labor this week, the first union member to serve in that post in more than 40 years. He was subsequently sworn-in and went to work.

Walsh is a card-carrying member of the Laborers' Union, Local 223 and also led the Boston Building and Construction Trades Council. Walsh had served as the Mayor of Boston since January 2014. The Senate confirmed him to the post in a 68-29 vote.

The AFL-CIO released a statement congratulating “our proud union brother. He understands the power of collective action, and his confirmation strengthens our fight to improve the lives of working people across the country.” AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said, “It’s time to build a truly just recovery that hands power back to the workers who have borne the brunt of this crisis...Our work has only just begun, and we will be stronger with Secretary Walsh in the fight ahead.”

ICS CONCERNED THAT VACCINATIONS WILL BE A PREREQUISITE FOR SHIPPING

The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) is reaching out to the global shipping community airing their concerns that vaccinations could soon become a compulsory requirement for work at sea pointing to reports that some countries insist that all crew be vaccinated as a pre-condition of entering their ports.

ICS says that reports estimate that developing nations will not achieve mass immunization until 2024, with some 90% of people in 67 low-income countries standing little chance of vaccination in 2021. They calculate that 900,000 of the world’s seafarers (well over half the global workforce) are from developing nations. They say, this is creating a ‘perfect storm’ for shipowners who may be forced to cancel voyages if crew members are not vaccinated. They would risk legal, financial and reputational damage by sailing with unvaccinated crews, who could be denied entry to ports.

ICS says delays into ports caused by unvaccinated crew would open up legal liabilities and costs for owners, which would not be recoverable from charterers. Furthermore, while owners would be able to address the need for seafarer vaccines in new contracts, owners attempting to change existing contracts or asking crew to receive a specific vaccine requested by a port could open themselves up to legal liabilities.

ICS Secretary-General Guy Platten said, “We’re already seeing reports of states requiring proof of COVID-19 vaccination for seafarers. If our workers can’t pass through international borders, this will undoubtedly cause delays and disruptions in the supply chain. For a sector expected to help drive the global vaccination effort, this is totally unacceptable.”

INTERNATIONAL BODIES WORRY OVER VARIANT’S IMPACT ON MARINERS

The International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) and International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) expressed concerns that the numbers of seafarers impacted by the crew change crisis are on the rise due to travel restrictions imposed by governments in response to new variants. Industry analysis shows that 200,000 seafarers are currently affected by the crew change crisis, a marked reduction from the height of crisis where 400,000 needed to be repatriated. However, with governments reintroducing stricter border control and travel restrictions due to new COVID-19 variants, it is becoming more difficult for crews to transfer to and from ships. ITF/ICS also noted that vaccine prioritization for seafarers must also be addressed. Vaccine passports being considered by some countries pose a potential barrier to crew changes as seafarers from developing nations are unlikely to have an opportunity to receive vaccines until July at the earliest.

“The stark reality is that only a few handfuls of countries have treated seafarers with the respect they deserve by designating them real key worker status,” said ITF General Secretary Stephen Cotton. “Unless governments move from the protectionist positions that they’ve been in for over 12 months now, and allow seafarers genuine free movement and prioritization for vaccinations, sadly the situation could easily spiral out of control yet again.”

MARAD ADVISORY RENEWS GPS INTERFERENCE WARNINGS

The Maritime Administration issued a new Advisory following multiple incidents of “significant” GPS interference affecting global shipping in certain hotspots. They pointed out that these ship system disruptions have caused “lost or inaccurate GPS signals affecting bridge navigation, GPS-based timing, and communications equipment. Satellite communications equipment may also be impacted.” Reviewing the last six months, MarAd points out that multiple incidents have been reported in the eastern and central Mediterranean Sea, the Persian Gulf, and in the vicinity of the Suez Canal. Maritime GPS disruptions or anomalies should be reported immediately to the NAVCEN at <https://go.usa.gov/xQBaw> or via phone at 703-313-5900, 24-hours a day.

GREAT LAKES VESSELS ARE BACK AT IT

The 2021-22 Great Lakes shipping season lit off this week with great hopes and expectations that last year’s “down” season is a thing of the past and trade on the Lakes is on an upward swing. The Soo Locks opened up on Wednesday after a two-month closure during which it received maintenance and critical repairs. M.E.B.A.-contracted Interlake Steamship Company has all nine of its freighters in the water including its three 1,000-foot vessels. Canadian-based Chamber of Marine Commerce president Bruce Burrows said, “Shipments of some construction materials, petroleum, and iron ore took a heavy hit from the pandemic. Key cargo segments like iron ore and construction materials will continue to improve, but the extent will be dependent on the pace of economic recovery in both countries, and how governments handle vaccination distribution and economic stimulus measures.”

Burrows said, “These workers are just as much frontline workers as those in trucking, rail, airline and other essential services that have ensured our supply chains continue to operate. Vaccinations will be important to ensure the mobility of our workers and to improve opportunities for crews to have shore leave, which is incredibly important for their health and well-being.”

APRIL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS – ONLINE OR IN-PERSON (*All times are local*)

Monday, April 5 – Boston (In-Person)@1200; Seattle-Fife (In-Person)@1300;

Tuesday, April 6 – CMES (In-Person)@1430; Charleston (Online)@1400; Houston (In-Person)@1315; Oakland (In-Person)@1230;

Wednesday, April 7 – Jacksonville (Online)@1300; New Orleans (Online)@1315;

Thursday, April 8 – L.A.-San Pedro (Online)@1230; NY/NJ (Online)@1300; Norfolk (In-Person)@1300; Tampa (In-Person)@1300;

Friday, April 9 – Honolulu (In-Person)@1100

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