

National President's Conference Notes – March 10 – 11, 2019

This is the final version of my NPC notes that I took. I limited [my original notes](#) in order to get them out to a few of my members as soon as I could. I have added Vance Zimmerman's address to the NPC along with a few opinions. Again, I apologize in advance for any errors or mistakes as these were my notes and my recollection as the comments were being made at the podium or microphones. It is important that I mention how dedicated these NPC delegates are to the issues of helping our membership around the country. I applaud the work they do at these NPCs as this is one of the most important events the APWU has to educate local Presidents.

Chuck Pugar – NPC Chairman

Dena Briscoe – NPC Co-Chairman

Roscoe Woods – Host Local

June NPC – Approved a candidate debate or time for candidates to address the NPC (candidates for President, Vice President & Industrial Relations)

Since the Agenda Items are on the NPC's website and the discussions are to help local Presidents, I will limit the agenda Items to only basic subject matters.

NOTE: There were additional topic discussed but the majority of items are listed below.

- Bad Stories / Bad Press
- HQ LSSA
- OT Rules
- RI-399
- Fair and Positive TA
- Line H Contract Update
- 1.6B
- APWU Election Constitution Language
- Union Information Stats
- Retirees Wanting to Remain Full Dues Paying Member
- Pictures and Video on the Workroom Floor
- NLRB Issues
- Movement for a People's Party
- Pay Administration
- Lump Sum Payments
- Late Conversions for PSE's
- Day of Mourning
- Postal Banking
- National Safety & Health Meetings
- SOP on New Dock Doors
- OSHA Ergonomics / Sit / Stand Stools
- NIOSH Issues

- PTF Hub Schedules
- PTF Opt-Out MOU
- Conversion of PSE's
- Article 12
- Alternative NBA's
- High 3 Retirement Changes
- Sick Leave Buy Back
- LMOU Training
- Accountable Mail
- Scheme Training
- Clerk Assignments w/Custodian Duties
- TL-5 – Project Work
- MS-1 Handbook Negotiations
- MS-1 Beta Test
- Training for MM-7s
- Article 38.3.K.4
- Akey Training Convention
- Postal Banking
- Abusive Supervisors
- E-Reassign
- Special Delivery
- Lead Clerk Reliefs
- USPS Breaking Lease Agreements

Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman Address to the National President's Conference (NPC)

- Zimmerman went over some Safety Issues
- New Database for grievance search on new APWU website. Roll out date will be soon
- Went on thanking many people for a multitude of things. (During the "Thank you Tour" It felt to me that Zimmerman had won an Oscar at the Academy Awards but I quickly realized that I was still at the NPC)
- Recent National Arbitration Decision (which was Denied)
- Recently heard National Arbitrations (three which we haven't received decisions on)
- Cases scheduled to be heard for National Arbitration (one arbitration)
- NLRB has changed 180 degrees and are looking for ways to overturn previous Union wins
- EGS Tracking System
- Dues Check Off
- FMLA Covered Issues
- Work environment issues – Will assemble a group of local presidents to meet and discuss issues on the workroom floor

Reported that they had Impasse a few days ago and it looks as though we will be going to arbitration.

Zimmerman reported that we had replaced our previous Lead Economist with a new team lead by Robert Palmer and he believes that this will be an upgrade.

Zimmerman stated that management's offer at Impasse were to strip the rights of our members in each craft. Zimmerman stated that he was insulted by their offer. Zimmerman's demeanor immediately became agitated when discussing management's offer. The agitation led to anger about the way management was not bargaining in good faith. All the anger subsided when Zimmerman picked up a Snickers candy bar and took a bite. It reminded me of Betty White and Abe Vigoda in the Snickers commercial where it states, "You're Just Not You When You're Hungry!"

Overall, I found Zimmerman's presentation very entertaining.

President Mark Dimondstein's Address to the National President's Conference (NPC)

Brother Dimondstein started off by saying controversy is a healthy thing, and that he was happy to be speaking and answering questions at the NPC.

Some of the topics Dimondstein discussed

1. International Women's Day - honoring working-class women
2. Teacher uprisings around the country.
3. Hotel workers struggles
4. Flight attendant strikes
5. New APWU website launch date (estimated May 1, 2019)
6. Postal Banking - Thanked the New York Metro Area Local work on pilot programs for postal banking. The APWU is putting pressure on the USPS to try pilot programs in Puerto Rico.
7. Board of Governors
8. PRC in their 10th year of PAEA
9. New RI-399 Agreement was made by three (3) equal partners (USPS, APWU & NPMHU) Claimed they negotiated a better process and APWU & NPMHU received \$14.5 million each to distribute to employees. In addition, the USPS spent approximately \$3 million on training.
10. Appointed Ron Suslak as Northeastern Regional Coordinator (Note: Suslak was the key person in the current RI-399 Agreement)
11. Spoke of the Secretary of Labor Alexander Acosta anti-Union agenda and spoke of why Unions are calling for his resignation.
12. Spoke of a new political party (People's Party) and how the APWU is open to look and listen to what they have to say.
13. USPS Real Estate Deals - We need to look at the way the USPS closes stations and branches. Many times, the USPS makes claims that landlords are kicking them out or making unrealistic demands of the USPS which forces closings. By investigating these claims, we can go to the media and show proof of the USPS's dishonesty and attempts to shut down stations and branches.

14. Spoke of the newly appointed APWU Election Committee Members and update on cost savings for ballots (will be mailed first class at 2-3 hundred-thousand-dollar savings).
15. APWU National Convention
2020 Convention will be held August 17 - 20, 2020 in Los Angeles, California
2022 Convention is tentatively scheduled from August 15 - 18, 2022 in National Harbor, Maryland (still in Negotiations)
16. The APWU is looking into representation for OWCP injured employees. The APWU is consulting with Union lawyers to see if representing injured employees is possible.
17. Organizing an Anti-Privatization Fight with Judy Beard heading up this fight.
18. Tax Day Actions - Rally families and communities to discuss postal issues.
19. Senate Hearing on Task Force on USPS - Tuesday, March 12, 2019
20. Discussed the USPS - APWU Contract Negotiations
21. Stated that he had full respect for the Rank and File Committee

He felt the tentative agreement was "Fair and Positive" in order to move forward

Stated "This is an Imperfect Leader"

Stated there are three ways to get a contract

1. 1970 Strike
2. A voluntary Negotiated Agreement
3. Binding Interest Arbitration - 3 Arbitrators (USPS Arbitrator, APWU Arbitrator, Neutral Arbitrator)

APWU Chief Negotiator - Mark Dimondstein

APWU Chief Spokesperson - Vance Zimmerman

Stated "Negotiations are never easy, they are always difficult"

"It's about Power and Leverage"

"Impacted by the times"

Negative issues - Task Force on USPS, Postal Rates, No Relief from Pre-funding, Political climate against USPS

Positive issues - such as teacher uprising

We had the responsibility to look at the history of Interest Arbitration

What is the Interest of each party at the national level?

We've lost ground on economics

Spoke of the worst APWU contract arbitration we had in the past.

We have to weigh their strengths and weaknesses and take away their strengths

We are not negotiating with ourselves

Spoke of the when the APWU gave up Special Delivery Express Mail Clerks (was a giveback)

"Compromise is Legitimate"

Agreement was to extend the National Agreement for 2 years (September 2020)

Stated that previous administrations had published the tentative agreements prior to the Rank and File receiving them. He may have done it differently if he could do it over.

"At Impasse our lawyer did a terrible job"

We have a new economic team for the APWU

After the Rank and File rejected the tentative agreement, the APWU tried hard to get a plan B, but didn't happen.

Next week the parties will invoke Mediation

It normally takes 10-14 months for Arbitration

All provisions of the Collective Bargaining Agreement are in effect and enforceable with the exception of the following two items:

1. Retail Moratorium
2. No Layoff for those employees who don't have 6 years of service

Question and Answer Session for Mark Dimondstein

Scott Hoffman – Boston Metro stated that the basic requirements for APWU Constitution in regard to contract negotiations were not followed. Stated that the Rank and File sat in Washington DC for a week without being provided tentative agreements that had already been signed prior to them arriving. Stated that the National Craft Officers were not involved fully in the process and had not seen the tentative agreements. Hoffman stated that the Vice President and Craft Directors were left out of the negotiations. Dimondstein argued that they had been informed. This disagreement went back and forth (heated exchange). Hoffman stated that the Rank and File, through their investigation, found that Dimondstein and Zimmerman failed to advise the APWU National Craft Officers of the signed Tentative Agreements. When Hoffman asked Dimondstein why Craft Officers weren't included nor had they viewed the TA's, Dimondstein disputed Hoffman's claim and said Craft Officers were included in the

process. Hoffman proceeded to say that Dimondstein was “LYING.” In my opinion, Dimondstein’s demeanor made it seem like he felt it was all a witch hunt and fake news, while Hoffman and the Rank and File Committee had based their conclusions on actual interviews with National Officers.

NOTE: I personally made a motion (Sunday) for APWU National Craft Officers to address the NPC about what they knew about the Signed Tentative Agreements (TA’s) prior to Dimondstein and Zimmerman bringing the TA to the Rank and File Committee to be voted on. That Motion FAILED! The same motion was PASSED (Monday) and later WITHDRAWN (See Below). It is my opinion that had Craft Officers been able to address the NPC, more information would have been provided to our membership. We could have then learned what mistakes were made in order to prevent them from happening in future contract negotiations.

Dimondstein stated: “I did for the most part everything correctly” and “Negotiations can be fragile and delicate”

Was asked about whether all of the signed tentative agreements will be brought into Arbitration. Dimondstein stated that Management and Zimmerman withdrew some of the signed TA’s and the remaining will probably be included in Arbitration. No timeline has been set for Arbitration. It is possible for the arbitrator to ask for all signed TA’s but the USPS and APWU will fight only to allow the ones that weren’t withdrawn.

Dimondstein was asked to give specific date that the Craft Officers were informed of the signed Tentative Agreements, but he could not answer with a specific date. He stated, “Craft Directors were at the craft tables” and “There has to be a balance between the Crafts and the Whole.” (I took the latter statement as meaning that having an agreement was more important than the Craft Officers agreeing with Dimondstein)

Once again there was a discussion as to whether the Craft Officers had been informed at all or what they were told about the agreement that was made.

Roscoe Woods from the 480-481 Area Local made a motion to allow the Clerk and Maintenance Craft Directors to speak on what they knew. Motion Passed with only one (1) verbal no vote (**my local Union's State President**).

Dimondstein was asked if the Vice President was an active part of the Negotiating Committee as her name had not been brought up since Dimondstein began giving his presentation. Dimondstein stated that she was.

Dimondstein was asked about Health Plan Rates and negotiations. Dimondstein stated that the USPS wants to only pay 72%, they are currently at 73%. The APWU would like management’s percentage to be higher and we are negotiating to move the percentages up.

Dimondstein stated that the APWU is trying to get a Leadership Academy together and hopefully can have it ready in 4 to 6 months.

AJ Jones – Eastern Montgomery County PA Area Local spoke on issues of some on the Rank and File Committee, specifically that the TA's were signed in September 2018, yet the committee was not consulted. The R&F Committee spent one week on lockdown but continued to be told that there was nothing to report. One day was allotted in advance for reviewing the signed tentative agreements, only after the committee arrived were they told that they could have more days to review and discuss them.

Many local Presidents came to the microphones and asked President Dimondstein to be the leader of the APWU and bring everyone together and heal the hurt feelings and mistrust at the National APWU Headquarters. In the spirit of trying to keep the negativity that had been festering since Dimondstein and Zimmerman had agreed to the tentative agreement, the NPC made a motion to keep Presidents from posting on Social Media about the NPC (Which many believed was not enforceable, nor a proper motion to make). However, the motion passed. (I just like most other local Presidents honored the NPC Motion)

Roscoe Woods came back to the microphone and withdrew his motion that the Clerk and Maintenance Craft Officers be able to speak about their knowledge of contract negotiations. The NPC Delegates never heard from the Clerk or Maintenance Craft Directors after that motion was withdrawn.

I asked Brother Dimondstein to bring up some issues in contract negotiations (Carriers working in the Clerk Craft, management contracting out APWU work and issues where Level 5 Mail Handlers making more than Level 6 Clerks). Other postal employees at lower level grades are making more than APWU represented crafts at higher grades and this must be addressed. I have long argued with National officers that yearly increases in our Health Plans eliminate pay wage increases for our membership. They seem to agree with me, but nothing is ever done. Why Not?

Finally, I feel that Dimondstein and Zimmerman have gotten what they wanted in the first place, as arbitration won't take place until after this year's APWU election. Sadly, the damage may already be done, no matter who is in charge in 2020. I believe it is time for our leaders to actually step up and fight for our membership. We need to stop the givebacks in Contract Negotiations, the blatant contract abuses and harassment of employees on the workroom floor.

Sam Wood

President – Southwest Florida Area Local

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