



Quarter Notes

Musicians of Western Montana

March/April, 2020 Newsletter



At The Top

In this edition, we see impacts from the COVID-19 virus, look at information from AFM about the relief package for musicians, update some changes in operations, review the most recent General Membership meeting and check in with Jason Slead about the recent Western Conference.

Remember that we want and need your input for the newsletter. Please send comments to mowmprojects@gmail.com with Newsletter Comments in the subject line.

President's Report

Brothers and Sisters,

What a crazy time we are in! My musician world was operating ever so normally just a month ago. Back then, my days were busy and the calendar was full of appointments, many of which were gigs. Let's talk about that.

My February was jam packed. Once I got done with the memorial service for my Mother in Great Falls, and the clearing out of her apartment which took most of the first week, I got back to Helena. Waiting for me was a busy schedule of rehearsals, lessons with students and gigs. By the middle of the month, I had played four different jazz gigs with four different bands. The rest of the month was a blur of rehearsals and gigs including a Helena Symphony concert. Early March brought a long awaited trip to Florida to see my daughter and her new husband. We were in and out of airplanes, airports and busy restaurants for a week, never thinking of keeping six feet of social distance. The day we got back, things began to look different. Long scheduled events were being canceled, the first casualty being the March Helena Symphony concert and shortly after, the rest of the events on my gig calendar. I went from having a very flush February to a very lean March in the music income department.

I'll bet a lot of the rest of you have a similar situation. Your music income is gone and your gigs have dried up. That is bad news.

There is good news for musicians however. The most significant piece is that this global pandemic will end. Most of us will survive and things will get back to something like normal. We must be patient and protect ourselves in the meantime. Other good news is that the American Federation of Musicians has been instrumental in helping pass legislation for a relief package which will benefit working musicians. You can read more about this in a letter from President Ray Hair which is included in this newsletter. Another piece of good news is that staying home

without rehearsals, meetings or gigs to distract us, we have a golden opportunity to work on our professional skills. Take this chance to practice your instrument, learn some new music, work on your promo materials, communicate with your band mates, reach out to venues, book some gigs! When this crazy period ends, people will want to go out and they will want music. Let's be ready for them!

Be sure to take a look at our new MOWM website. the URL is: <http://musicunionwestmt.com/> This site has lots of helpful information about who we are and what the Union can do for you. It is a great tool for communication and an excellent way to contact us. We look forward to getting back to work as soon as it is safe to do so. Stay healthy and well.

Don Stone

President, Local 498-642 AFM

New Executive Board Member

Larry Lytle has been appointed to the Executive Board, filling the last vacancy. Local 498-642 now has a complete EB.

Term Life Insurance

To: members of MOWM Local 498-642

From: Executive Board

For many years, one of the understood benefits of being a member of the musicians union has been a term life insurance policy of at least \$1000. At times, this amount has been higher, at \$1250 and even up to \$2000, but the point is, there has always been a modest life insurance benefit to help the families of union members through difficult times. Unfortunately, through actions by the AFM at the national level, this benefit no longer exists. The life insurance arrangement AFM enjoyed for many years through the Met Life Insurance Company has been discontinued.

The officers of Local 498-642 have explored other insurance carriers and have determined that, due to the average age of our local members, providing the insurance coverage we once had is unaffordable. We will continue searching for a carrier who can provide affordable coverage, but so far we have not been successful.

As a result, we are very interested in member input as to how strongly you feel about this benefit and whether you might consider a dues increase to help offset the cost of term life insurance. Please send us your opinion on this matter by sending an email to afmunion1@gmail.com.

In any case, we all have to accept that there is no "death benefit" in place at the current time.



General Membership Meeting

Meeting of February 18, 2020

by Dave Thomas, V-P

On Tuesday, February 18, 2020, a scheduled General Membership meeting was held at the Labor Temple.

The meeting was called to order by President Stone at 7:05 pm and the agenda was efficiently followed to allow time for guest Felicia Hellems to present information about AFM pensions. Specific discussions included the Co-

Funding grant status, Music Performance Trust Fund, ideas for membership involvement and growth, digitizing the Local's documents and how to involve musicians throughout western Montana.

Guest Hellems described her personal participation in the pension program via the Austin, Texas local and encouraged a serious look at the advantages of pension plan participation. Her comments were well-received by members present.

Western Conference Report

I was invited to attend the 82nd Western Conference of AFM Locals in Spokane, WA at the end of the third week of February. Not knowing what to expect, I filled the car with gas and headed to find out what kind of information I could glean from a room full of Musician's Union veterans.

Upon arrival I checked in, got my complimentary SWAG, and found my seat. Over the next couple days, I was immersed in all things Union. Throughout the day, the agenda kept us busy learning topics, such as "Learning How to Listen with the Intent to Understand"- which was shockingly more complex than the title would hint. We also learned about "Racial Justice and Union Building". Not being from an area that is very racially diverse, I was a little ashamed of how naive I was to the plight of minorities looking for a Union that reflects another's culture or race.

But our agenda wasn't just learning. We also had sessions that provoked discussion and reflection. "Recruitment and Mobilization" motivated us to think outside of your box. To push the status quo and rethink our current methods to build our membership.

When we weren't learning and discussing we were finding moments to introduce one another and share our stories, pasts, and home locals. This was my favorite part. I loved hearing what other factions of our conference where wrestling with and what their successes were. It seems although we have many miles between us, our challenges are very similar.

I recommend these conferences to anyone who has an interest in Union life and networking. The conference refreshed my enthusiasm and gave me skills to make my resolve more impactful!

Thank you to Local 498-642 for this amazing opportunity!!

By Jason Slead



Meetings Calendar

All meetings are held at 7 pm at the Labor Temple, 110 N. Warren St, Helena, MT, unless otherwise noticed.

NOTICE – The next regularly scheduled General Membership meeting is planned for Tuesday, May 19, 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic we may have to change the date. Please check our Facebook page and web site for up-to-date information.

General Membership: According to our Bylaws, general membership meetings are to be held in the second, third and fourth calendar quarters at a date, time and place determined by the Executive Board. The EB has

determined that the Bylaws do not prohibit us from holding additional general membership meetings so you'll see in the schedule below we plan a GM meeting in each quarter of 2020.

The dates are: February 18, May 19, August 18 and November 17.

Executive Board: The Board meets quarterly and on special call of the President. *The EB reminds everyone that any member in good standing is welcome to attend EB meetings.*

Reminder to check out our Web Page

Our updated and improved web page is up and running. Check out <http://musicunionwestmt.com/> – the website for Musicians of Western Montana. New additions include a link to our Facebook page and the latest newsletter under the News tab.

The web site is a work in progress, and you can expect revisions and updates over the next few months. **One urgent need is for photos of yourself and/or your music group you are willing to share.** The photos will appear on our home page with a clickable link to information about you – type of music played, instruments, etc. Details are being worked out but our hope is to build a foundation for future referrals to musicians.

Local 498-642 Activities Update

► The EB has decided to accept S/T Lee's offer of physical office space. Alex will operate out of **618 Helena Ave., Suite 1A**. Our goal is to provide a physical address for the Local as we move forward with an energized program of re-branding and member recruitment.



This location is for students of all ages and goal sets as a step towards access to musical arts in a centralized place. It houses 4 studios, a repair shop, and eight teachers offering piano, violin, cello, music theory, woodwinds, brass, guitar, vocals, all with the goal of music study and networking.

The studios are open to the public if they contact Alex Lee at 406-916-8800 to discuss and schedule. More info to come.

► All meetings of the Local will continue to be held at the Labor Temple, 110 N. Warren Street.



American Federation of Musicians

Legislation that will extend unemployment benefits to those who rely on contract work and freelance jobs just passed the U.S. House of Representatives. The third Coronavirus (COVID-19) relief package already passed the U.S. Senate and now heads to the president's desk for his signature.

We will share information about how to access the expanded benefits as more details become available, but highlights of the relief package for musicians include:

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)

- Temporary 39-week program to provide payment to freelancers, gig workers, and others not traditionally eligible for unemployment benefits who are unable to work for reasons related to COVID-19 emergency.
- The minimum benefit equals one-half of your state's average weekly unemployment benefit plus \$600.

Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC)

- Additional 13 weeks of unemployment insurance for employee-classified workers who have exhausted or will exhaust state unemployment benefits.
- Provides an additional \$600 per week for anyone receiving regular state unemployment insurance, Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), or Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA).

2020 Recovery Rebates

- This is a one-time cash benefit to households of \$1,200 per adult (\$2,400 per couple) and \$500 per child.
- People earning \$75,000 (\$150,000 jointly) or less will receive the full amount. This phases-out for people earning more than \$99,000 (\$198,000 jointly) with no children.

Arts Funding

- \$150 million to state agencies to provide grants and support to arts organizations.
- \$75 million for the National Endowment for the Arts and \$75 million for the National Endowment of the Humanities.
- \$75 million for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) which supports PBS and NPR.

I am so proud of all the union musicians who made calls, sent emails, and tweeted to reach their elected officials. Gig worker benefits were not included in this legislation until lawmakers received your calls, emails, and tweets. Never forget that musicians standing together have power!

In Unity,

Ray Hair
AFM International President

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