



Bull City Speaks!

Newsletter of the Durham City Workers Union chapter of UE Local 150

<http://UE150.org>

Durham Union Leaders Meet with Mayor Williams and Mayor Pro Tem Middleton To Advance Fight for Fair Pay!



Pictured (Left to Right), Vincent Daniels (Public Works), Willie Brown (Public Works), Mayor Leonardo Williams, Gerald Woody (Solid Waste), Montrell Perry (Solid Waste), George Bacote (Solid Waste) and Mayor Pro Tem Mark-Anthony Middleton on February 1, 2024.

On the first day of Black History Month, February 1, 2024, members of the Durham City Workers Union UE150 from Solid Waste and Public Works met with Mayor Williams and Mayor Pro Tem Middleton to discuss our demands for the Fiscal Year 2024-25 budget, to be voted on in June.

George Bacote, sanitation lead spokesperson, started off the meeting by sharing the difficulties that workers face such as working two jobs and many not being able to afford the skyrocketing cost of rent in Durham. Bacote also shared new information about the growing solid waste routes, that are likely to add even more work on the over-stretched workforce.

The union reiterated our demands to raise the wages to \$25 per hour with a special emphasis on workers in Solid Waste and Public Works, who have been the main workers speaking out and participating in Union actions. Workers also demanded that

Solid Waste Operators be reclassified to a new job title to recognize the special skills they have beyond being "Maintenance Technicians". **Christopher Benjamin** recommended the title of "Sanitation Engineers".

The City has currently hired Logic Consultant Group to put together a Compensation Study with recommendations on how to adjust city workers pay. The Mayor and council do not know the exact release date, but claim the report should be out in mid-February or March. The City is hosting a Budget Retreat on February 16 and March 1 at Lake Mist from 8:30am - 4:00pm. The union is encouraging workers to take off work to attend. We are told the Compensation Study should be released on that date.

During the meeting, workers also reiterated that we will need to think bigger about where we find tax revenues to fund the needs of the workers and our communities.

UE150 leads march of hundreds through Durham on MLK Holiday to demand Fair Pay!



Durham Solid Waste and Public Works UE150 union members lead march on Dr. King holiday, January 15, 2024

Over the weekend of January 13 - 16, city workers organized in the UE union lead or participated in marches and rallies from ten cities across North Carolina and Virginia, united behind the common demands of raising wages to \$25 per hour and expanding union rights. Workers marched to honor Dr. Martin Luther King's fight for civil rights and workers's rights. Members spoke of the lack of progress since the 1960's.

Dr. King took his last stand supporting striking sanitation workers in Memphis, TN in 1968 raising up the same demands as city workers today - fair pay, collective bargaining and dignity!

George Bacote, sanitation worker spoke at the rally in Durham, as well as at the program at First Presbyterian Church stating, "We are having the same struggles that Dr. King fought, and years later we are still trying to climb that same mountain." Bacote stated later, "We need a serious raise this year to include raising the minimum wage to \$25 per hour and classification adjustments for solid waste operators."

In Durham, over 200 community, faith and other labor allies joined the action lead by the Durham City Workers Union. Many spoke out about the fights in

their workplaces, making the connection to the central importance of city workers to make the city run.

Workers were also invited by Rev. Dr. Warren Herndon, Chair of the Durham Martin Luther King Steering Committee, to participate in a program that same morning at the First Presbyterian Church. Present at the church were many state, county and city elected officials including Mayor Williams, Mayor Pro Tem Middleton, and councilmembers Baker and Rist.

Vincent Daniels, UE150 member in Public Works spoke from the pulpit stating that, "we are marching because we're expected to keep up with the citizens' demand with half the workforce and half the pay of other municipalities. We are employed by a city that claims it cannot afford our services. This is a bunch of garbage. They have the funds to give us competitive pay, but prefer to keep it stored away for who knows what."

UE National Director of Organizing **Mark Meinster**, from Chicago, also came to town to support the city workers union campaign. Other allies like Union of Southern Service Workers, National Domestic Workers Alliance, Durham Workers Assembly, Duke Grad Student Union and others also joined us!

UE City workers from TEN cities across NC & Virginia march to commemorate Dr. King, demand \$25 per hour and Union Rights!



Greensboro City Workers Union



Raleigh City Workers Union



UE Director of Organizing Mark Meinster



Charlotte City Workers Union

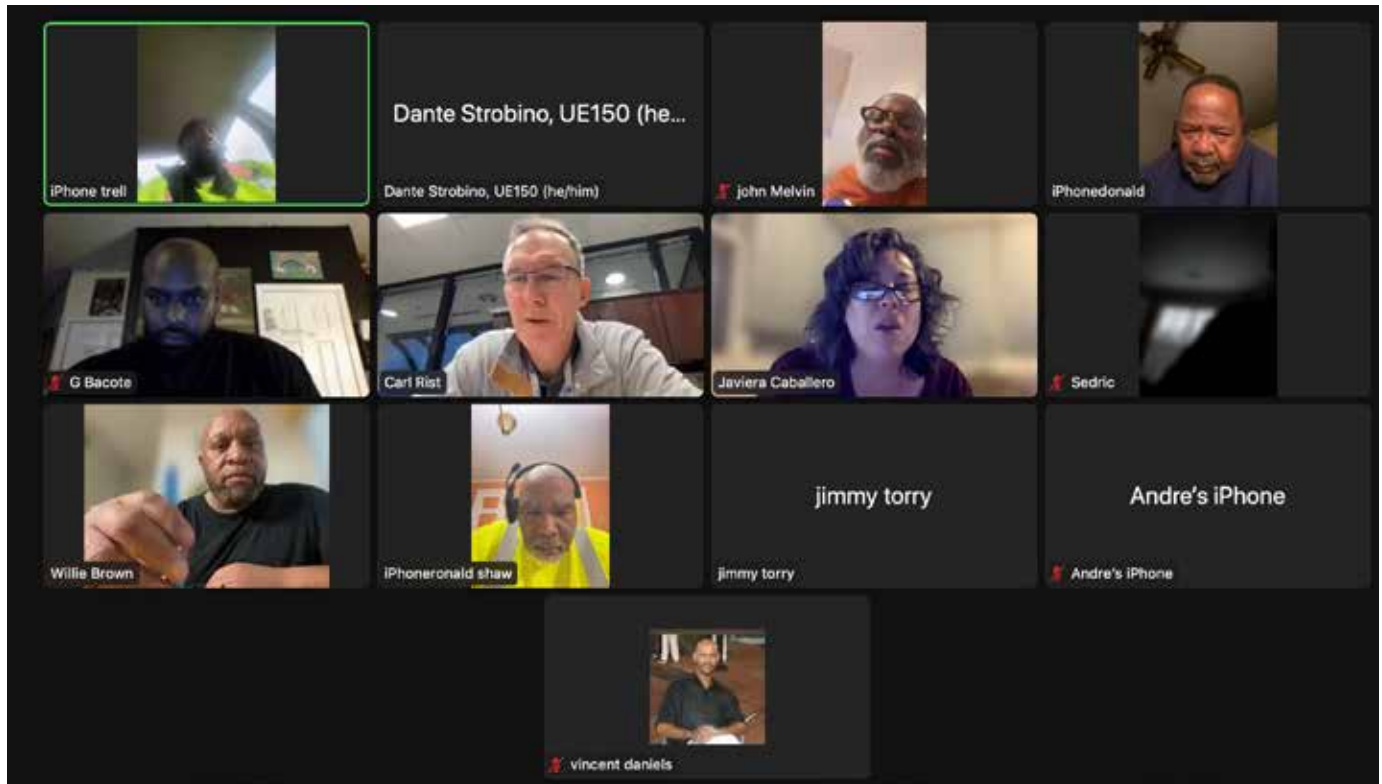


Rocky Mount City Workers Union



UE City Worker Union members from Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth and Newport News, VA

Durham Union Leaders Meet with Council Members Baker, Rist, and Caballero to Build Support for Fair Pay



(Pictured above): UE150 members meet with City Council members Carl Rist and Javiera Caballero on January 9. Both council members claimed that city workers pay was their top priority for the City Budget this year.



(Pictured above): UE150 members meet with City Council member Nate Baker on January 23. Baker stated he put our demands for \$25 per hour as his #1 budget request. We also discussed a campaign to get Duke to pay taxes!

Union Defends Member During Termination Appeal Hearing



Kodee Hyman (center) pictured with Steward Willie Brown and UE Rep Dante Strobino on January 4 inside City Hall before the appeal hearing.

On January 4, Union Steward Willie Brown and UE International Representative attended an appeal hearing with Kodee Hyman, who had been unjustly terminated from Parks and Recreation department in the fall of 2023.

Hyman was terminated for a lawnmower burning up on a day that he wasn't even at work. The two witnesses for the hearing were not able to show up because management intimidated them from attending to speak in favor of Hyman's reinstatement.

The union supported Hyman in preparing his documentation, opening statement and witness examination questions. The three person hearing panel is scheduled to make their recommendation to City Manager Wanda Page, who will make the final ruling in the coming weeks.

Union Builds Mass Faith Support Across Durham to Win Fair Pay

The three largest alliances of faith organizations across the city include the Durham Congregations in Action (DCIA), Durham CAN and the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance (IMA), each representing over 50 congregations. Two of these three large faith alliances have signed on to support our union's campaign for \$25 per hour and reclassifying solid waste operators. The third, the IMA, is working to schedule a meeting for us to attend to build their support. DCIA and Durham CAN signed onto a letter that was sent to the city council on Dr. MLK holiday in support of our demands.

Rev. Dr. Warren Herndon invited our members to speak on MLK holiday at the First Presbyterian Church, which was attended by many other community and faith leaders, along with elected officials. Additionally, Associate Pastor Emily Wilkes from Trinity Ave Presbyterian Church spoke at our MLK rally, and has been helpful in attending city listening sessions and speaking up in support of union demands.



Building these alliance with faith leaders, the moral leadership of our city, goes a long way to pressure the city council to support our union's demands.

We have also been invited to present at the upcoming DCIA Congregation gathering at Watt Street Baptist Church on February 20 at 11:45am to build even more support from all congregations present!

The City Claims it Doesn't Have Enough Money to Pay Workers What They Deserve. Will Duke Univ. Pay Up?



City Council Member Nate Baker and many community allies are launching a campaign to **call on Duke University to make voluntary payments in lieu of taxes of \$20 million per year to the City of Durham.** In beginning to make payments, Duke would join its thriving peer institutions, such as Yale, Upenn, Cornell, Princeton, Dartmouth, Brown, and others, who already make payments in lieu of taxes to their respective local communities.

According to a letter Nate Baker is circulating to building support,” Durham has long struggled with poverty and inequality. Many of Durham’s communities have experienced underinvestment, gentrification, and displacement. Currently, thousands of residents are unable to afford the basic needs of housing and food; one in five young children live with food insecurity; and our needs for affordable housing and public services are growing. This unsustainable path will continue until Duke University begins contributing their fair share.

“Duke University is a tax-exempt corporation and Durham’s largest landowner with land holdings valued at over \$857 million (and a coming countywide property reevaluation set to dramatically increase this value), with a multi-billion dollar endowment, and ever-expanding property holdings.”



\$857 Million
Value of Duke's Land (they pay 0% property taxes)

**Yale, Upenn,
Cornell, Princeton,
Dartmouth, Brown**
Other Ivy League Universities
that already make payments in
lieu of taxes to their local
communities.