



COPPEA ELECTIONS SOON UNDERWAY

It's that time of year again! COPPEA will soon be holding general elections for several Steward positions and two Officer positions: Vice President and Treasurer.

Thanks to all those members who accepted the nomination to become a steward! There are no contested positions and a vote still needs to be held. The voting will be done electronically. Keep an eye out for the ballots. Information will be provided shortly.

In case you were wondering, by becoming a Steward or Officer of the Union, you can help direct and influence COPPEA's growth and success. A steward is the front line representation of COPPEA and serves not only their colleagues but acts as an information conduit back and forth with management.

If you, or someone you know, would like more information, please contact a current Officer or Steward, or COPPEA Union Representative Behnaz Nelson.

Join us in the work of protecting our members' rights in the workplace. Become a Steward or Officer and become an empowered force for COPPEA!

BUDGET SEASON IS HERE

With the 2012-13 budget cycle getting started, now is the time to seek out your Bureau Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) members. Once again, the Mayor has directed all Bureaus to form a BAC that includes representatives from management, labor, customers, and internal/external experts. BACs review the Bureau's draft budget requests, weigh-in on program and service rankings, and provide input on any proposed reductions. Typically, the labor members on BAC's are the same people who represent you on the Bureau LMC. In some bureaus, the LMC suspends regular activities and transitions into the BAC.

Early input by labor will be extremely important as the Mayor has tentatively directed all General Fund Bureaus/programs to prepare cut packages of four, six and eight percent. **Speak up now!** Bureaus create lists of budget requests in November, cull those lists in December, and then load the final numbers into the Requested Budget in January. Bureau Requested Budgets are due the last week of January. This is a very small window for labor participation. Labor costs are often the greatest expenditure in the budget. Time is of the essence because once Bureaus have submitted their Requested Budgets the only way to influence the final budget is through the channels available to the public at-large.

Committee Updates

Communications: Many thanks for the hard work and efforts put in by the Communications Committee on this second newsletter! The Committee will spend the upcoming months focusing on reaching out to new members to engage their participation in the Union. This will also be an opportunity to encourage new members to become full members rather than fair share; the difference being the ability to vote in union elections and having a voice for their rights. If you're a fair share member, contact a Steward to learn how to become a full member.

Training: The Training Committee held its first meeting on Oct. 26. The committee identified four areas of interest to begin our training sessions. Topics in December 2011 and early 2012 will center around: Fighting Back on the Attack on Public Employees; Steward Training 101; Understanding Your Contract and Your Layoff/Recall Rights; and PERS Legislation that Affects You. If you would like to hear about upcoming Training Committee meetings, please contact your Union Representative, Behnaz Nelson. Information on each upcoming training will be provided to all COPPEA members. We look forward to seeing you on the Committee and at the trainings!

A good resource for monitoring the Citywide budget process is the City's community-oriented budget web page: www.portlandonline.com/communitybudget. At the web site, the public (including you) can submit questions about the budget and offer budget suggestions. During the budget decision-making process, electronic testimony is accepted from the web site. Bureaus' Requested Budgets, financial analyses of the requests, current and historical budget documents, and other financial reports will be posted to that web site throughout the budget process. **Be informed and be proactive!**

More on the back >

- Calendar of Events
- Member Spotlight
- Professional Fund Update
- Feature: Lessons from the Great Depression

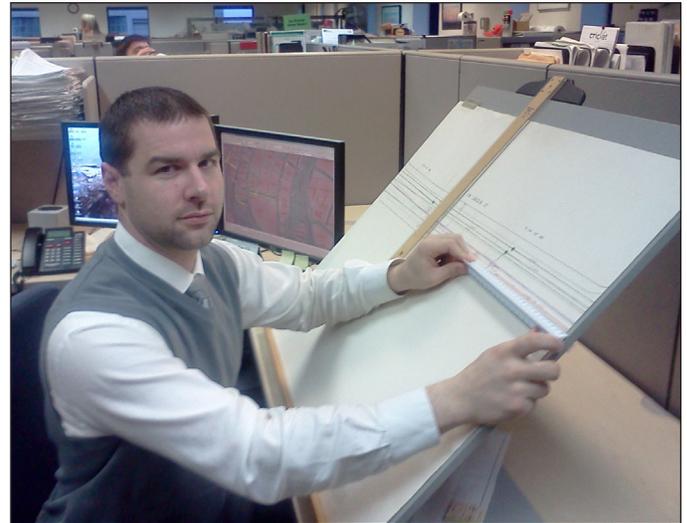
Member Spotlight: JOHN J. WILSON Engineering Technician II - Transportation Street Systems Management

I started as a Parks Seasonal Maintenance Worker 13 years ago. I started with SSM in February of 2011.

If I had to pick one thing that I love most about my job, it would be my teammates. I really enjoy collaborating with the folks around me to make projects more efficient, make standards clearer, and solve difficult problems with utility locations and logistics. I've always enjoyed being a public servant, and working for the people is certainly something that inspires me, but at the end of the day it's the men and women that I work with that keep me going.

I want to be an active COPPEA member because I believe that the union helps us work together as a unified force to ensure we are treated fairly by our employers. I believe that being a union member allows my voice to be heard.

I'm a native Oregonian, and recently married a Colombian princess. I enjoy travelling, kickboxing, photography, and anything active. I'm a volunteer English teacher and active in my church—St. Mary's Cathedral. I can be reached at 503-823-7092.



COPPEA CLIPS Nov. 2011

Published jointly by COPPEA and Professional and
Technical Employees, Local 17
2900 Eastlake Avenue East Suite 300,
Seattle, WA 98102

Phone: (206) 328-7321 Fax: (206) 328-7402

Your Union Representative is:

Behnaz Nelson: behnaz@pte17.org,
or 1-800-783-0017, ext. 112

COPPEA Officers

Gerry Verhoef, President
Rachel Whiteside, Vice President
Paul Cone, Interim Treasurer
Shannon Rivas, Secretary
Mark Bello, Past President



Professional Development Fund Update

Just a reminder that COPPEA's Professional Development Fund, (CPDF) is available now for you. If you've passed your probationary period, you are eligible to apply for up to \$1,500 for training and professional enrichment reimbursement during the term of our current contract, which expires June 30, 2013. Since July 1, 2011 we have received 83 new requests and approved over \$20,000!

Your first step is to log onto our website, www.coppea.org, and download the instructions and application. Fill out the request form and submit it to Laura DuVall (Laura.Duvall@portlandoregon.gov). The PDF Committee will review your request and notify you when you are approved. This process can take up to six weeks, so please be aware of that timeline. This is a financial benefit to COPPEA members so take advantage of this great opportunity.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Nov. 1 - E-Board meeting: 11 am, Portland Bldg, 2nd Fl, Room C
 - Nov. 15 - Officer's Meeting
 - Nov. 24 - PDF Committee Meeting
 - Nov. 25 - LMBC

Lessons from The Great Recession...for all Workers

As we enter the third year of the Great Recession, most every Local 17 and COPPEA member has felt its effects.

Since 2008, public employees across every sector of government—state, county, city and health districts—have experienced furloughs and layoffs, a pay freeze or salary cut and increased health care costs for diminished benefits. So, like all middle-class workers, we adapt the financial aspects of our lives to respond to this economic mess. It is difficult, but all workers are having similar struggles.

Unlike workers in the private sector, we are also challenged on many additional fronts. When corporations need to cut costs they simply lay off employees and raise prices (or baggage fees if you're an airline) to support their stockholders' bottom line. But when public sector budgets, those that are overly dependent on revenues from sales and property taxes, begin to amass deficits due to the reduced revenues, something different happens. Shareholders on the public-sector side demand more. Citizens expect maintenance of the bottom line—keeping taxes frozen, while still providing the same service level.

When this happens, government budget writers look for ways to do both. Yet as soon as the budget writers begin speaking about the reality of service cuts or raising taxes, we know what happens next—public employees become targets.

Across the country, public employees are being used as scapegoats for the economic crisis. Everyone who has ever had a gripe with government decides to target public employees as if they were the reason for the crisis. We know better. We're not the problem. We're the solution. We are masters at doing more with less.

So why are public employees targeted?

Public discourse is rife with merchants of conflict, constantly pushing the "haves-vs-have-nots" discussion. They pit private-sector workers vs. public-sector workers. They hit all the hot buttons – wages, healthcare and pensions—all the benefits that non-unionized corporations have stripped from workers,



and use them to pit worker against worker.

An article titled "Why Public Employees are the New Welfare Queens" appeared in *The New Republic* recently. In it, author Jonathan Cohn writes about "why your local fireman or teacher has such a nice retirement package, why you probably don't, and the way conservatives are using that contrast to advance their broader economic agenda."

The tactic of pitting one worker against another pushes the real issues into the background from corporate bailouts to the sub-prime debacle to our broken tax system. The inflammatory tactics of talk radio, newspaper op-ed pages and their brethren on TV "news channels" may ultimately work to eliminate most of what workers have created over the last 100 years.

We're not just talking about specific labor laws or workplace safety regulations, but the social contract of the industrial age. It asserted the philosophy that if one learned a trade or got an education and then used that knowledge to launch a lifetime of labor earning a decent, respectable wage—that at the end of those working days the worker would have a pension benefit providing a modest, livable retirement. For decades, unions helped deliver on that promise.

This prompts Cohn to ask, "To what extent is the problem that the retirement benefits for unionized public sector workers have become too generous? And to what extent is the problem that retirement benefits for everybody else have become too stingy?"

To this we add, since when is looking forward to a pension after a lifetime of labor not a reasonable expectation? From there the discussion continues on, to questioning why deficits are balanced on the backs of those providing the service.

Cohn concludes with, "... it seems like we should be looking for ways to make sure that all workers have a decent living and a stable retirement, rather than taking away the security that some, albeit too few, have already. But that's a conversation about shared vulnerability and shared prosperity—a conversation we don't seem to be having right now."

On behalf of all workers, this conversation needs to happen. — Vince Oliveri, Local 17 Union Representative and Legislative Director