



# COPPEA CLIPS

A Newsletter for the COPPEA Chapter of Professional & Technical Employees Local 17

March 2014



## A Note from Your New Union Representative

**M**y name is Amy Bowles and I am the new Union Representative for the COPPEA Chapter of Professional and Technical Employees (PTE) Local 17. Although I have had the pleasure of meeting many COPPEA Chapter members since I started in December 2013, I wanted to introduce myself again in this issue of COPPEA Clips.

I come to PTE Local 17 from a 10-year career as a legal advocate for indigent criminal defendants. Specifically, I was a public defender in King County, Washington. I most loved assisting my clients through a difficult time, advocating for them in court and interpreting the law. Some of my most rewarding moments occurred when I represented juvenile clients.

Prior to my public defense career I attended law school and prior to that I worked for Public Citizen – a Ralph Nader nonprofit in Washington D.C. There, I worked on pharmaceutical drug reform legislative campaigns. I attended legislative hearings at the Capital, met with members of Congress and worked on outreach. Before Public Citizen, I interned at the National Partnership of Women and Families – Work and Family group. There I worked on Family and Medical Leave education and outreach.

I am very excited and honored to be the COPPEA Chapter’s newest union rep. I continue to be encouraged and energized by the commitment and engagement of our active membership. There are many critical issues before us this year. It’s at this time, more than ever, that we need to rally together and continue this engagement and active membership involvement.

In May, Portland citizens will be asked to vote on the privatization of Water and Sewer which – if successful– will place approximately 300 COPPEA jobs

within Water and BES in significant danger. (See Elliot Levin’s article on page 3).

On March 3, we received great news! The Right-to-Work (RTW) measure scheduled to be on the statewide November ballot, was pulled from the ballot. If successful, this measure would have eroded public sector employee unions in the State of Oregon. Many members attended Local 17’s RTW training in December. We will continue to have trainings on legislative issues, such as RTW, and we will continue to fight for workers’ rights. (You can read more about RTW on page 4, and the in-depth article in the Jan/Feb issue of Local 17’s *Insight* magazine: [ptel17.org/publications/insight/insight\\_jan\\_feb\\_2014.pdf](http://ptel17.org/publications/insight/insight_jan_feb_2014.pdf)).



Don’t forget to check the COPPEA website ([www.coppea.org](http://www.coppea.org)) for important information on how to learn more about these campaigns and how to be involved in fighting these measures which will dramatically impact public sector employees! The website also has information on future membership meetings, trainings, and union events.

Also, please feel free to reach out to me at any time on any issue! My email address is: [amy@ptel17.org](mailto:amy@ptel17.org), or you can call me at 800-328-7402 ext. 118. I am in Portland at least two days a week and I’m happy to meet with you in person.

In solidarity,

*Amy Bowles*

### COPPEA Clips

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# Working with Management to Maintain a Strong Healthcare Plan



**Gerry Verhoef, PTE  
Local 17 COPPEA  
Chapter President**

**T**he Labor Management Benefits Committee (LMBC) is a group that meets regularly to review the City of Portland's self-insured CityCore health-care plan. One of the duties of the LMBC is to review the status of CityCore funds, including medical, dental, and prescription claims to the fund. This assists the committee when making annual plan change recommendations that are then presented to the Mayor who makes the final decision on the plan.

Gerry Verhoef, PTE Local 17 – COPPEA Chapter President, is the labor co-chair and a voting member of the LMBC. Because of her role, Gerry is able to provide input on plan changes and their costs to COPPEA members, and in turn, votes on recommended changes to the plan that are most beneficial to COPPEA Chapter members. Paul Cone, COPPEA Chapter Secretary/Treasurer, Elliot Levin, PTE Local 17 Research Director, and Amy Bowles, PTE Local 17 Union Representative, also attend the meetings, but are not voting members.

During this time each year, the LMBC focuses on how to reduce the financial impact to both the City and employees. To do this, the LMBC analyzes the usage trends from the current plan year, which runs from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014, and compares them with the previous year's trends. Currently, the usage is about 1.8% below last year's usage.

The LMBC also compares the current plan with other market and peer agencies, and considers how new legislation, like the Affordable Care Act (ACA), may impact the plan. For example, the ACA policy sets parameters on what deductibles are included in out-of-pocket (OOP) and sets coverage limits for health care plans. The City's current plan has incorporated the ACA mandates to date.

At this time, the committee is discussing their recommendations for the plan that starts on July 1, 2014. Some of the areas where changes are being discussed include: copay amounts, OOP maximums, and deductible limits. The committee is currently discussing an increase to the OOP maximum as one way to reduce plan costs without unduly affecting members because very few participants max out at the current level. They are also talking about a new plan benefit in the form of an optional buy-up dental plan. Wherever possible, changes are made that better the plan, lower the costs, and minimally impact participants.

The committee will vote on March 19 on the proposed plan to be presented to the Mayor. You can contact Gerry if you have any questions or concerns at [gerry.verhoef@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:gerry.verhoef@portlandoregon.gov).

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## Professional Development Funds to Renew on July 1

**T**hank you to everyone who has used the Professional Development Fund (PDF) this year!

As of March 5, 2014, PTE Local 17 – COPPEA Chapter members have exhausted the PDF for 2013-14 and have sent a message to the City that they take their professional development and education seriously!

This good news does mean that the PDF is gone until July 1, 2014. At that point, the PDF will be increased from the \$125,000 for the 2013-14 year to \$150,000 per year for 2014-17. There is a wait list, for those requests that come in between now and July 1, 2014. The wait list will be used if a previously approved request is cancelled.



Please apply for the PDF again starting on July 1, 2014. Last Spring, the COPPEA Bargaining Team successfully secured the PDF for 2013-17. The next time we bargain, we want to show the City that the City of Portland as a whole benefits from the education COPPEA members receive from the PDF and that our members are serious about being the best public employees they can be.

Finally - a thank you to John Wilson, COPPEA Chapter Steward and member of the PDF Review committee. He initially wrote an article for this issue detailing the amount of money left in the fund when there was money left. John has been a valuable resource on all questions PDF.



# Stop the Privatization of Portland's Public Water!

By Elliot Levin, PTE Local 17 Research Director

**STOP  
THE BULL RUN  
TAKE  
OVER**

[www.stopthebullruntakeover.com](http://www.stopthebullruntakeover.com)



In early February, it was announced that an initiative to strip control over water and sewer systems from the City of Portland had qualified for the May ballot. This initiative, funded almost entirely by a small group of very large industrial water users, would create an independent "Water District" which would be led by an elected board separate from City Council. Individuals currently associated with the Water Bureau or Bureau of Environmental Services would be barred from running for the new leadership council. While the initiative aims to take control of these services in order to control rates, it contains no assurances that rates would actually be reduced.

While details remain murky as to the actual implementation of the initiative if it were to pass, COPPEA jobs in the Water Bureau and BES would be in considerable danger. There is no assurance that the new water district would keep the current Water Bureau and BES workforce intact. Moreover, the current COPPEA contract may not

apply to employees of the new water district, and thus seniority and bumping rights may not apply in the event that there are large-scale layoffs. While lawsuits would probably delay potential implementation, Local 17 COPPEA Chapter members can't afford to wait and see how the courts rule on this destructive measure.

Local 17 strongly opposes this initiative, and is working with the opposition campaign, called "Stop the Bull Run Takeover." This campaign represents a broad coalition of labor unions, environmental organizations, and citizens' groups that are unified in the desire to maintain Portland's public control of its water and environmental resources. In coming weeks, the campaign will begin assembling materials and advertisements.

Local 17 will keep you informed of developments and ways to be involved in the campaign via the COPPEA website ([www.coppea.org](http://www.coppea.org)). You can also visit the Stop The Bull Run Takeover campaign website ([www.stopthebullruntakeover.com](http://www.stopthebullruntakeover.com)). Local 17 has made a financial contribution to the campaign, but if you would like to personally donate, you can do so on their website. If you would like more information about the campaign or the initiative, please contact Amy Bowles, your Local 17 Union Representative ([amy@pte17.org](mailto:amy@pte17.org)) or Elliot Levin, Local 17 Research Director ([elliott@pte17.org](mailto:elliott@pte17.org)).

*In Danger:*

**Close to 300  
COPPEA Jobs at  
Water and BES!**

**Portland's Most  
Important  
Environmental  
Regulations!**

**Accountability and  
Transparency!**



COPPEA VP and Local 17 Exec. Board Trustee, Rachel Whiteside, hands a check to Krist Jo (KJ) Lewis, the Campaign Director for "Stop the Bull Run Takeover," with Local 17's Elliot Levin and Amy Bowles.

# Right to Work is Removed from Ballot!

A Right-to-Work measure was slated to be on the Oregon ballot in November, but on March 3, several measures were dropped from the ballot.

Gov. John Kitzhaber had been working with labor and business groups behind closed doors to reach an agreement. In total, 13 measures were removed from the ballot.

Local 17 had been working with other labor organizations and community groups like Keep Oregon Working on this issue, and was beginning a series of trainings to educate members on what becoming a Right-to-Work state would mean for our members and Oregonians. We are excited that this will not be a measure on the ballot this fall, but will continue to be diligent in our efforts to uphold workers' rights.

Local 17 will continue to work with groups like Keep Oregon Working to analyze the impacts of the remaining ballot measures - including one that could affect payroll deduction of union dues - before the election. Stay tuned to the COPPEA website ([www.coppea.org](http://www.coppea.org)) for more information on these issues and upcoming trainings.



*We must guard against being fooled by false slogans, such as 'right to work'.* - Martin Luther King, Jr.

## COPPEA VP Appointed to Local 17 Executive Board

COPPEA Chapter Vice President, Rachel Whiteside, joined the Local 17 Executive Board in February 2014. She was appointed by the Board in order to fill a trustee position vacated by Brenda Sevilla-Miranda, who was unable to serve the remainder of her term.



Rachel Whiteside

Whiteside is a City Planner II for the City of Portland Bureau of Development Services. She has been an active member of COPPEA for many years, and a strong supporter of COPPEA's affiliation with Local 17, which became official in Sept. 2013.

"Local 17 has provided an amazing level of service to COPPEA for the last three years and I welcome the chance to do the same for Local 17," said Whiteside.

### COPPEA Officers & Stewards

**Gerry Verhoef, President**  
**Rachel Whiteside, Vice President**  
**Paul Cone, Secretary/Treasurer**

**Bureau of Environmental Services**  
Victoria Busch, Karyn Hanson, Angie Tomlinson, Ana Brophy,  
Andrew Neuman, John Wilson

**Bureau of Technology Services**  
Charles Mosley, Keith Holland, Brian Ventura, Katherine Enriquez

**Portland Bureau of Transportation**  
Ruthanne Bennett, John Wood, Cathy Perry,  
Gudrun (Goodie) Free

**Bureau of Development Services**  
Priscilla Partch, Mark Walhood

**Bureau of Planning and Sustainability**  
Tyler Bump

**Portland Water Bureau**  
Jamie Wilde, Mia Sabanovic

**Shared (Fire, Police, Revenue, Bureau of Government Relations, City Attorney's Office)**  
Karen Obana

**Bureau of Parks and Recreation**  
Aulani Johnson