



# COPPEA CLIPS

Sept. 2011

## COPPEA WELCOMES TWO NEW CLASSIFICATIONS

After nearly one year of discussions and negotiations, the Environmental Program Coordinator and Communications Engineer classifications are now part of COPPEA. Currently there are 14 people filling these positions who now have the solidarity and unity of the 700-plus members of COPPEA.

While there were many challenges, we are pleased to be finished with the bargaining and are satisfied with the results. When a Union bargains with an employer to add classifications into the greater bargaining unit, the Union is at a disadvantage.

The accretion mainly serves the Union's interest and the employer has limited interest in agreeing to terms not favorable to their business needs. Essentially, the employer takes an attitude of "take it or leave it, but these are the terms."

When this contract reopens for negotiations in late 2012/early 2013, if there are pressing issues we could not capture here, we can certainly discuss revisiting them at that time. COPPEA did achieve a pay increase for five members of the EPC classification with four members remaining at top step and one newer member at Step 1.

While we achieved success in some areas, we were unable to get both classifications OT at the rate of time and a half. Overtime will be paid to both classifications at the rate of hour for hour. The City simply said their interest is to do away with this practice for FLSA exempt employees Citywide from this point forward. We were successful in keeping the EPC classification on a pay step system, but the CE classification will remain on a pay range system since it closely resembles the other IT classifications in the bargaining unit.

EPC and CE members: We look forward to working with you and seeing you at our monthly membership meetings held on the first Tuesday of each month from 12 to 1 p.m. on the 3rd floor of the Portland Building (pizza is always provided!).

## COLA IS BACK FOR 2011/2012

On July 1, 2011 COPPEA members received a COLA after foregoing an increase last year. Based on the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, a 1.2 percent wage increase was instituted by the City. Hooray!

## PDF IS ALSO BACK FOR 2011/2012

Another milestone took place on July 1st – COPPEA's Professional Development Fund (PDF) was reinstated. The PDF committee, consisting of 2 COPPEA representatives and 1 management representative, met for the first time on July 21.

To date, 15 of the 17 requests have been approved. As the funding for PDF is City Bureau dollars, requests must be in line with City Fiscal Years (FY). Since there were no funds allocated prior to July 1, 2011, no reimbursements will be made for any expenditure done prior to July 1, 2011. The PDF committee meets once a month, with an option to add a second meeting if warranted. The committee is also taking this opportunity to review forms that were used in the past and for any needed updates.

## LABOR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

The Labor Management Benefits Committee (LMBC) is on summer break and will meet again in September to begin the annual process of considering possible enhancements to our benefits program.

The COPPEA Labor Management Committee (LMC) has met monthly with four management representatives. To date, our focus has been on putting the PDF back in play. Having successfully completed that task, we will now shift discussions to the City's crack down on unscheduled sick leave. We know the City has compiled data yet we question the comparables used and will explore those further. There will also be significant conversations around the uniformity (or lack thereof) of addressing excessive use of sick leave.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Sept. 13 - E-Board meeting:  
Noon, in the City Hall Rose Room, 2nd Floor.
- Sept 20 - Officer's Meeting;
- Sept 27 - COPPEA LMC
- Sept 23 - LMBC (See website for details)

*More on page 2 >*

## Why Be In The Union When They Get What We Get?

**H**ave you ever had a co-worker ask you why they should pay union dues when the non-union employees get the same benefits as the union employees?

When a co-worker raises this question what they are really asking is, "what is the union benefit and why should I pay for it?" This question presents an opportunity to educate a co-worker about the benefits of being union.

### **There's Much More to the Union Contract Than a Cost-of-living Adjustment (COLA) and Health Care**

A union labor contract is much more comprehensive than just COLA and health care. A union contract creates a binding and enforceable contract covering many areas of employment including the benefits of seniority, layoff processes, recall processes, vacation, sick leave, discipline without just cause, the hours and conditions of your labor including overtime protections and much more. Years, if not decades, of labor negotiations are memorialized in the labor contract. Each word labor discussed, fought over and maybe even went on strike for.

Although some non-union members may be getting some of these benefits, they are not getting all of them and the key is that the union employees have a contract with the employer regarding these wages and benefits and the employer cannot change them without negotiating with the union.

This is a type of security that a non-union employee does not have. As a non-union employee, your employer can alter your wage, classification, duties, sick leave, health care, or anything else for any non-discriminatory reason (or no reason) at any time.

### **Representation**

Not only does the contract provide a binding agreement with the employer, it also provides for membership in a larger union family that provides the benefit of numbers, unity, education, leadership, organization and representation. When your contract with your employer is broken, you have advocates like stewards, union representatives, communications specialist, and lobbyists ready to assist you. When non-union members are forced to pay thousands of dollars for legal assistance, often with limited recourse, union members have all of the same resources made available to them as part of membership.

## Member Spotlight: WHO AM I?

**ANIKA CURRY** -- Well I am one of the longest serving stewards, representing BTS members (Larry Frey's got me beat!).



I keep saying this will be my last term... but then I keep running. I like what I'm doing and I really like meeting and helping others. I work at the 1900 Building in the Call Center Help Desk.

I've been with the City for 14 years. Moved here from California. I'm a mom to a 16-year-old son; and a daughter to an 88-year old mom. I'm also a first-time homeowner. I'm an outgoing homebody!

I like to bake, watch TV and read. I also go to a spirit-filled church, volunteer at homeless shelters and serve as a Rape Victim Advocate for the DA's Office. I am pleased and optimistic about the direction we are heading as an organization. Feel free to call or email me 503-865-2744 (work) or 360-831-7385 (cell) or [Anika.Curry@portaldn.oregon.gov](mailto:Anika.Curry@portaldn.oregon.gov).

There is also a full staff ready to help workplace leaders and members achieve union goals including negotiations expertise, dispute resolution, navigation of politics, and access to larger union resources.

### **Raising the Standard for Everyone**

At COPPE, there are over 700 members and at PTE Local 17 there are almost 9,000 members working collectively to make a difference in their lives and the lives of their co-workers. Little by little, we create change.

Although non-union employees may get many of the same benefits as union employees, the

*More on page 3 >*

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*Continued from page 2 >*

concerted work of the union community is often the reason for the level of benefit. With the unions at the negotiations table, lobbying elected leaders, advocating in the community, and working with management concerning wages, benefits and other terms and conditions of employment, the employer is often pushed much further than they would have gone had they been able to set the wage or the benefits unilaterally.

### **Holding the Line**

Also, in these tough economic times, union contracts are helping to hold the line. Employers who would have otherwise decided not to provide COLAs, or to cut hours, impose furloughs, and the like, are forced to deal with unions who have guaranteed wages and other benefits in place that cannot be altered unilaterally by management without agreement.

When a contract provides for a benefit, like a COLA, then management is compelled to provide it to non-union employees too, even if they would have preferred not to. (Otherwise non-union folks would organize if they saw union workers getting a COLA they did not get). And, if large groups of employees organized, then the power a large union membership creates would be formidable and employers often fear this type of power.

### **What is Possible**

When all workers in a workplace are in a union, understand the rights of the union and the right to negotiate, know the power structures and how to affect them and comprehend the benefits of a union contract, then the possibilities for what the union is able to achieve are broad.

### **Part of Something Important**

Union membership is not just about one workplace or one employee, being a union member is about being part of a social justice movement. A movement where workers locally, regionally, nationally and globally are advocating for things like vacation and sick leave for all workers, humane and safe working conditions, environmental justice, wage equity, education accessibility and quality, and much more. The possibilities are endless!— By Local 17 Staff

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### **COPPEA Officers**

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