



COPPEA CLIPS

A Newsletter from the City of Portland Professional Employees Association

October 2012

COPPEA Endorses Amanda Fritz for Portland City Council; Declines to Endorse in Mayor's Race

COPPEA Officers, members, and a consulting team from Local 17 conducted a series of endorsement interviews with candidates for City Council and the mayoralty of Portland during the month of September. The goal was to evaluate the candidates based on their understanding and support of union goals and values.

Broadly notable policy questions such as the recent fluoridation vote or reports on police oversight were not the focus; covered topics included labor interests surrounding PERS/retirement reform, contracting, budget cuts and their impact on front line workers, maximizing COPPEA members' technical and planning expertise for the good of the city, labor liaisons in City Hall and the use of labor-management committees, and the decline of civil service in general.

Commissioner Amanda Fritz and Representative Mary Nolan are competing in the November runoff for Position 1 of City Council. Both candidates were capable and directly responsive to questioning, but a consensus was reached that the panel should recommend Commissioner Fritz to the Executive Board for endorsement. Commissioner Fritz's existing and supportive relationship with COPPEA was seen as a significant factor in the decision, and it was felt that her experience with current City budgeting and functioning represented a strong working position for COPPEA in the next term. The Executive Board ratified the recommendation from the endorsement panel in its meeting October 2, 2012.

Candidates for Mayor Charlie Hales and Jefferson Smith were also interviewed. A consensus of endorsement could not be reached; the panelists failed to find agreement on which candidate's combinations of policy and approach were superior or best suited for COPPEA's interests. Their differences did not speak to labor concerns, and so no meaningful basis developed for endorsing either as a group.

Members are by no means being given directives by COPPEA on how to vote. The goal is to identify the candidates best positioned to govern in alignment with labor values and concerns, and provide you with an institutional "seal of approval" as a guide, to the extent you factor workplace issues into your decision.



Photo from Amanda Fritz's website: www.amanda2012.com

COPPEA Officers

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

Your Union Representative is:

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

COPPEA CLIPS

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



COPPEA Member Spotlight: Gerry Verhoef, Engineering Associate



I started working for the City in 1994 as an Engineering Tech II/CAD for the Water Bureau and finishing off with them as an Engineering Tech II/Design. I have had a couple of stints at PBOT at the Engineering Tech II level and actually left the City (and the State) for about 3 years. I am currently working as an Engineering Associate with Portland Parks & Recreation and loving this new realm of work.

I have about 8 years as a COPPEA Steward, 1 year as Treasurer, and have been COPPEA's President since January of 2011. January 2011 is also when COPPEA formed its partnership with Local 17 which has proven to be a very positive step for COPPEA. I look forward to continuing my COPPEA leadership role and partnership with Local 17 through the next contract negotiation round.

One of my biggest thrills as President is seeing COPPEA's membership involvement evolve!! I know there are great things ahead for COPPEA!

During my down time - which is a novelty in itself - I am mother to 4 sons and grandmother to 2 gorgeous little girls and a very handsome little boy. They all live out of state however so most vacations are spent with them! The time left over is spent doing home and yard projects, watching movies, reading, and now and then a little 8-ball in the corner pocket.

How the Professional Development Fund Helps COPPEA and the City

When members seek professional development opportunities through workshops, courses and conferences, it not only helps the individual meet their personal career goals, but it greatly benefits the City of Portland. These three COPPEA members explain how.

Erik Durshpek, Capital Project Manager I, BES

"I'm currently seeking a Bachelors of Science degree in Civil Engineering. The City will benefit having additional trained personnel with field experience, knowledge, and understanding of the principles in the Civil Engineering for making effective decisions as well as provide new design ideas and concepts for reaching City's goals and objectives. Educated and trained staff will be able to also analyze projects on a higher detailed level and make complex engineering decisions, evaluating alternatives and recommending or adopting effective courses of action within the constraints of the established budget goals."



Mary Edin, GIS Technician II, PBOT

"I have received Professional Development Funds for books related to my job, both computer science and GIS/ Cartography, and they have been very helpful, but the greatest impact of the PDF to me professionally has been the conferences I have been able to attend because funds were available."



Colleen Mitchell, Environmental Technician II, BES

Colleen has used the COPPEA Professional Development Fund (PDF) to take classes ranging from river restoration to wetland plants. The continuing education not only aids in her career development, it also provides her with additional tools to perform her job more efficiently and effectively."



What it Means to Be a COPPEA Steward or Officer

The Union Steward is the first line of defense in protecting our members' rights. Stewards act as the eyes and ears within our offices and work units. It is our obligation as a Steward or Officer to look after the general well being and protection of the members.

Contracts or work rules that are not honored by management are worthless. Union Stewards are the key to enforcing our contract, work rules, and overseeing the implementation of safety or administrative regulations on the job. It makes no difference whether a contract violation is innocent or deliberate; all violations are potentially harmful. Similarly, the contract must be enforced equally whether it involves a member or a fair share member.

It is helpful for Stewards and Officers to build friendly relations with management so that we may approach them when we have concerns. The Officers foster these relationships through the City-COPPEA Labor Management Committee (LMC) and Stewards can do the same at bureau LMC's. That said, you can never allow your opinion of a particular manager or employee to interfere with the decision-making process. Stewards must act promptly and decisively to ensure all grievance timelines are met and our members' rights are preserved.

Stewards are expected to assist in strengthening the Union by building support for our programs among the workers they represent. This is accomplished by keeping the bulletin board in your work area up-to-date (or creating one if it doesn't already exist), keeping (and using) an email list of your members, and reminding members of their right to vote on Union actions. Encouraging members to become involved is increasingly important as we approach another contract negotiation in 2013.

New employees are a perfect opportunity for Stewards to "organize". Stewards should make a point of greeting new employees on his or her first day and provide them with a copy of the contract (management will not do this). Go ahead and introduce them to other members, Officers, and show them where to find more information on the Union. Be sure to invite them to any union meetings.

Communication, both up and down, is absolutely essential for Stewards and Officers alike. It is vital that the President and Vice-President

understand the views our members hold in their specific offices or units. Likewise, it is important that the Union's positions and activities are made known to each and every member.

In order to fulfill this function, it is crucial that Stewards attend Executive Board meetings on a regular basis. While email and websites have made it easier then ever to communicate, some information should be kept off of the City's system. Face-to-face discussions are still indispensable, particularly for some grievances, negotiations, and political topics.

A strong Union will have a much greater influence on negotiating wages and working conditions. Help strengthen the Union by volunteering as a Steward for your office/unit. Already a Steward? Consider stepping up to an Officer. Nominations for Officers will be held at the General Membership Meeting on October Nominations for Stewards will be at the November Executive Board Meeting.

A Steward has four major functions:

1. To enforce the contract and Union rules.
2. To organize his or her office/unit into a functional body.
3. To communicate the thinking and decision-making of the leadership to their members.
4. In turn, to report the members' ideas and thinking to the leadership.

2012 COPPEA Steward List

Bureau of Environmental Services

Patrick Torres, Victoria Busch,
Karyn Hanson, Angie Tomlinson

Bureau of Techology Services

Larry Frey, Dat Nguyen, Anika Curry

Portland Bureau of Transportation

Ruthanne Bennett, John Wilson, John Wood

Bureau of Development Services

Kathleen Stokes, Priscilla Partch

Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

Tyler Bump

Portland Water Bureau

Jamie Wilde, David Argast

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

Jerry Eckstrom

Bureau of Parks and Recreation

Steve Lower