

PTE 17 Seattle Chapter
Meeting Minutes June 9, 2016

Officers present:

President Darlene Flynn

Vice President Ford Walker

Treasurer Gabriela Vega

Secretary Ulysses Hillard was out of town

Minutes by Gabriela from an audio recording by Ford

The meeting reached quorum.

The May meeting minutes were approved unanimously by voice.

Chapter Officer Reports

Ford reported that all REC delegates should have received letter from PTE 17 Executive Director Joe McGee saying that he is planning to step down from his position. The letter states November 2017 as retirement date. He has started the process of stepping down and looking for a replacement. There will be a committee to select a future Executive Director.

Gabriela read a statement providing the balance of the bank account as \$5, 641.00

Staff Reports

Business Rep Guadalupe Perez reported that Local 17 represents approximately 10,000 workers in the State of Washington. There are normally four PTE 17 reps covering the City of Seattle, but currently there are only two representatives. The union just hired a third representative, this person will be in training and will start working in June or July. Guadalupe's portfolio is City Light, Fire Department, SDOT, and Department of Neighborhoods, and all of IT (at the moment). She said that the new rep has labor and litigation experience and advocacy skill.

Guadalupe reported that the City as a whole is doing an overhaul of how they are redesigning office layouts and the Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) is heading this project and have different options for different departments. City departments choose their options and pick a design.

In theory, there should be additional light because cubicle walls are coming down in height and there is more opportunity for collaboration. There are a lot of studies that corroborate that these new conditions do not provide enough privacy or help foster collaboration. The City has decided to keep moving forward with the space re-allocation but has not discussed or negotiated this with PTE 17.

When PTE 17 staff initially heard about the changes in office layout approximately 6 months ago, they put it on the record to Labor Relations and felt that this was a mandatory subject of bargaining and should be negotiated. The City disagrees and think that the actions are permissive and what happens under "permissive" is the City can go ahead and continue with changes and the Union can negotiate the impacts of their decision. The unions and the City have not agreed whether the actions are

mandatory or permissive. Staff have had several conversations and continues to talk to the City and request negotiations per unit.

These negotiations include type of design and timeline. The City had agreed to that but FAS continued to move forward and started implementing space planning without notifying Labor Relations - the party that had agreed to work with the Union - or Human Resources (HR) or the unions.

We have had two cases, one at Retirement Office and North Seattle City Light, where HR and Labor Relations did not know the spaces were being redesigned. The Union requested a cease and desist. In both cases the redesign was stopped and FAS is working with the Union.

What we hear from members is that you would like to negotiate the entire space as a “whole issue” and determine whether FAS can or cannot do this.

Several chapter members commented on Guadalupe’s report.

- Some members were not at the last meeting, employees of Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) recently became aware of the new space plan. There have been no talks or conversations with anyone about the plans. The spaces are being designed for “one size fits all”
- There have been no meetings to discuss the plan
- Emails have been sent to PTE17 business representatives describing these actions

Guadalupe explained that from documentation and conversations they have had with SPU, there is a layout plan. The Union is trying to achieve coordination between Labor Relations and FAS. At this point, PTE 17 staff are requesting that schedules and plans be available to the Union and SPU is requesting FAS to submit them as soon as possible.

The Union wants to receive information early on timelines and plans for re-arranging spaces and on another level be able to bargain how these changes occur. The union is in good position to do this this because at the Retirement Office they broke down the cubes and are rebuilding the space. Unfortunately the way they went about it has created a lot of liability for security reasons, and FAS had to restructure the entire space and is losing money. This has been a learning experience for them to engage with the Union, save money and do what they need to do, making sure the employees are on board with the changes.

At SPU, PTE17 staff were able to keep the original space for each employee, the original plan had been to share the space between two employees. Staff told them that was not going to work and SPU had to find a new space and we feel that was a win for all of us. Right now it looks like the City is willing to go back and make changes to the plan to accommodate employees.

Guadalupe asked if there are middle ground where employees will be accommodated give that negotiating space on a case by case is nearly impossible. It is not possible to say “don’t do anything at all.” We should think about what we can “give up” with the new layout and what that would be or look like.

An attendant brought up the issue of increased weight loads by adding 50 additional employees to every floor. In addition to the space the bathroom situation has deteriorated, employees are having to go to other levels.

Guadalupe discussed how the bathroom breaks could be another argument against new space layouts if employees have to take 15 minute breaks each time they have to go to the bathroom three floors away.

Additional SPU staff will move into SMT. The anticipated move date is September 4, 2016.

Guadalupe requested that SPU employees start conversations with other employees and propose a team of 3-4 people to be on the bargaining team. The team would work and compile interests and concerns just like you have been doing now. We will work together to get a letter to SPU raising the issues of accommodation and layout for employees.

A union member asked Guadalupe if they had an idea for a timeline for negotiations.

Guadalupe responded that unfortunately bargaining had started when changes are about to be implemented or have been implemented and no negotiations were made with the union prior to the changes. If the negotiations fail, the union would then go to PERC and raise the issue of how the union tried to bargain with the city in good faith but the city refused to listen and the changes are adverse impacts to employees.

The employee who asked the question followed up with a comment referencing OPCD (Office of Planning and Community Development) and the planned changes the office spaces there. Employees do not know what or when changes will be made to office space. PTE 17 staff do not have information on those plans and wants FAS to provide them.

Guadalupe requested that If employees observe staff taking photos, notes, etc. of the office layout please communicate with PTE 17 staff. That might provide an opportunity to act early. If you have not seen or heard anything formally but you hear something employees need to contact their Stewards or PTE 17 Reps.

Another member raised the issue of the expense for the new layouts. SPU employees mentioned a cost of 34 million dollars for the new office layout and transfer of personnel to different floors.

An SPU employee mentioned that, within management staff, there is not a lot of support for the addition or reallocation of space and staff.

Guadalupe mentioned that a manager had been helpful with her concerns to obtain a cease and desist action at that manager's office.

A City Light member does have a plan that has been shared with employees.

Another issue discussed by Guadalupe was Human Resources (HR) consolidation. She asked members if they had heard the term before. This is an important issue. The head of HR of every department will no longer report to the department's director but to someone in the personnel department.

Smaller city departments will not be reporting to personnel but at this time Guadalupe does not know what the breakdown of reporting is. HR will have a service level agreement and each department will have an agreement with HR and determine what functions go to HR general and what functions go to HR for specific departments.

Guadalupe explained how this will be extremely confusing. The unions want a big role in this because it is important to know what functions are centralized and what functions are not.

PTE 17 staff would like investigations to be under general HR because staff investigations are not partial if they stay in the same department. There are other functions that should be centralized such as sick and family leave.

At this point PTE 17 staff do not know what functions will be centralized, but they are involved in these negotiations.

Guadalupe then reported on "E3". PTE 17 made a proposal to change performance evaluations (PE) because they are inconsistent throughout the City. They can be unfair based on unfair standards. It is not an effective method and is used to punish employees in its current state.

Guadalupe asked members if they had heard of the program being tested at OPCD, IT, and other departments. There are five departments being tested. Employees are being trained because it is an online system. Early in the year one would meet with one's manager or supervisor and discuss goals for that year. The goals are constructed on the website live for performance management. Throughout the year the goals can be changed to accommodate project changes or changes with costumers.

There is a review three months later where one sits with one's manager/supervisor and talks about the goals. There is an opportunity mid-year to review performance. All information is then compiled and by the end of the year one would have a performance evaluation based on competencies that have been created.

Employees should be hearing about it in the next few weeks. After all PEs have been completed, the PEs will all go to review for oversight.

Another topic of discussion was the non-response from the Executive Director McGee informing Chapter Officers that Chapter bank accounts will now be centralized and that any expenses have to be approved by the PTE 17 professional office.

A union member in the audience informed the group that she had received a letter from Joe McGee informing her of his retirement and a search for a new executive director. The member questioned why that letter was not shared with all members. The member is happy with the retirement of the ED and mentioned how Joe McGee suspended elections, suspended REC (regional executive committee) meetings. This member has concerns of how the new director will be elected, it is anti-union and anti-democratic.

Darlene Flynn expressed that there indeed has been a lack of democratic process and that more information is better than less communication, and that members will be delighted to receive the news.

Guadalupe stated that the REC was not cancelled because of lack of democratic process but because Joe McGee felt the expense was too high for the union to pay.

Darlene Flynn clarified that even if Joe McGee feels that he has not done anything undemocratic, union members have a different view especially for reasons that do not add up financially.