

PROFESSIONAL VIEW
PEA'S NEWSLETTER FOR OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2007

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WINTER 2007 PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Submitted by David Peterson, President

The Executive Committee has continued its schedule of monthly Tuesday night meetings at the union office. The agenda is dominated by committee reports, city or school district negotiation related topics, and the Legal Council Report on current grievances and other issues.

Rebekah Doyle is being promoted to Grants Management Coordinator at the School District. Rebekah had to resign as PEA District Negotiations Chair (on the Executive Committee), because of this promotion. This position will be filled at the December 5th General Membership meeting. School District Accountants Maia Sierra has expressed interest in running for this position.

John Blackstone continues as steward for the Water Department. PEA is looking for a steward for the Office of Technology, and for the School District (the School District ordinarily has two stewards).

Some of the other current activities and discussion:

Discussed preliminary strategy for City of St. Paul negotiations and School District negotiations. You should consider taking the PEA City of St. Paul negotiation survey or the PEA School District negotiation survey if you haven't done so already. Contact Paul Hogrefe (City of St. Paul) or David Peterson (School District) for more information on taking a negotiation survey.

Reviewed information from the City and the School District LMC Health Insurance meetings (look for updates at the December 5th General Membership meeting),

Completed a Memorandum of Understanding between PEA and the City of St. Paul covering terms of City contribution rates to health insurance premiums for City employees during 2008,

Completed a Memorandum of Understanding between PEA and the City of St. Paul covering terms of on call employment (again look for an update at the December 5th General Membership meeting),

Upgraded Mike Wilde's status with PEA to General Counsel, and established a two year contract for 2008 and 2009,

Reviewed information on the funding status of PERA, with the scheduled employee increase in contribution from 5.75% to 6.00% effective January 1, 2008,

Discussed job description changes and responded to the City Human Resources Department,

Reviewed progress on arranging the union office (because of the recent office move);

Replaced clerical service for mail delivery and answering machine messages, to more volunteer work by the Executive Committee members (P.S. John Blackstone, thanks for your help),

Set the December 5th General Membership meeting agenda, and

Worked on the arranging of the 2008 calendar of events.

Again, thanks to PEA members for your support.

Check out the PEA website for more information: <http://www.peaonline.org/>

PEA Calendar of Events

2007

December 5th General Membership Meeting (with elections)
Mancini's – 5:30 PM

2008

March - TBA Combined Steward-Executive Committee Meeting
Joseph's Grill – 5:00 PM

June - TBA General Membership Meeting
Joseph's Grill – 5:30 PM

Sept. - TBA Combined Steward-Executive Committee Meeting
Joseph's Grill – 5:00 PM

Ongoing

The Executive Committee generally meets the first Tuesday of the month at the union office at 5:30.

The Legal Corner

by Mike Wilde

Silence equals nonexistence. If I don't raise my voice, it's like I never existed.

--Margaret Cho, Comedienne Revolution

I recently had a meeting with PEA members working in the library. We discussed many things including upcoming negotiations. When a few members asked about a particular issue for upcoming negotiations, I asked them if they included that good idea in their negotiation survey responses. Some responded with a blank stare; others admitted that they had not completed the surveys and still others had not yet checked their emails for the survey. My point was only to remind them that their specific concern would definitely not be included in the negotiations proposals unless it was formally raised. You must use your voice to be heard.

The same concept applies to PEA's negotiation committees. We are starting to move into negotiations with the City and we will soon follow with the School District. The last few times PEA went to the bargaining table we started our process with an internal survey. The survey was then collected and reviewed by a PEA negotiations committee made up of 5-10 members interested in formulating policy and proposals. The respective negotiations committees were then pared down to 2-3 individuals who actually joined me and attended the negotiations meeting with their employer. We are at that point again – and we need volunteers.

Are you interested in preserving City mileage reimbursement? Do you have particular interest in how working conditions might change during the GOP Convention this summer? Are there practices in ISD #625 that are wasteful or rules that our unfair? Do you wish to advance solutions through your bargaining unit or would you rather remain quiet and merely hope someone is thinking the same thing that you are? Now is the time to join your negotiations committee. It might be two meetings or it might last 6 months – but it is not too demanding and you will get a first hand account of your negotiations' platform and your employer's responses. Please contact Paul Hogrefe if you want to serve on PEA's negotiation committee with the City.

If you want to serve in ISD negotiations, call me at 612-227-8425. We need your input.

This December we also have our annual election for PEA Officers. Every year we want to make sure that the invite has been extended to anyone interested in running for office. If interested you should be prepared to attend the December annual meeting at Mancini's, get a nomination into me before the meeting or from the floor, and give a brief speech explaining why you are qualified to become a PEA Officer. If you win an election your term of service is at least one year (while remaining a member) and the time commitment is about one night per month with the possibility of a few additional evenings at the most. It would be helpful to learn of your interest before the meeting so that we can prepare ballots. Thank You.

SOME STUPID SPORTS QUOTES

These are actual sports quotes said by various people throughout the world.

New Orleans Saint RB George Rogers when asked about the upcoming season: "I want to rush for 1,000 or 1,500 yards, whichever comes first."

And, upon hearing Joe Jacoby of the 'Skins say "I'd run over my own mother to win the Super Bowl," Matt Millen of the Raiders said, "To win, I'd run over Joe's mom too."

Football commentator and former player Joe Theismann: "Nobody in football should be called a genius. A genius is a guy like Norman Einstein." (1996)

Senior basketball player at the University of Pittsburgh: "I'm going to graduate on time, no matter how long it takes."

Bill Peterson, a Florida State football coach: "You guys line up alphabetically by height." and "You guys pair up in groups of three, then line up in a circle."

Shaquille O'Neal on whether he had visited the Parthenon during his visit to Greece: "I can't really remember the names of the clubs that we went to."

Don't Go Over Your Boss' Head

Are you having a problem with your direct manager? Are you thinking about going over your boss' head? If your instincts tell you that it is a bad idea, you are right. By not respecting the chain of command, you'll alienate your boss and potentially your boss' colleagues.

In the working world there is a certain protocol in which communication flows up and down. Manager and employee relationships are based on trusts. So, by circumventing your boss, you are hurting that relationship.

Even if you ask your boss' manager not to tell, you cannot bank on that conversation remaining a secret. How can she correct the issue without explaining to your boss the issue and how she became involved? Face it; if you go above her, she will know it. Once your boss knows, your relationship will not be the same. You'll be the one working to rebuild it. You may be feeling worse than you did before.

So, play it smart. If you have a complaint, be direct and honest with your boss. Schedule a time for your discussion. Lay it on the table along with your suggestion for resolution.

If your manager shuts you down and seems to have no interest in solving the problem, let her know. You may want to prepare meeting notes with language like, "I hear you saying that you don't think we need to add staff for the holidays. I feel frustrated because I want our department to succeed and my projections show our hold times will increase tenfold if we do not add temporary staff. I would be happy to prepare a summary for you to bring to your manager. How do you suggest we handle this imminent increase in calls?"

The bottom line is it is unwise to usurp your boss, or take your grievance to your boss' manager. You've got to work within her perimeters. If you are concerned that her misjudgments will later be blamed on you, send her an email message documenting her decision. Try something like, "Thanks for our meeting today. As you advised, I will not hire temporary staff. Instead, we will begin ten hours of overtime per week. I'll alert you if our hold times or abandon rate are outside of company metrics."

There are unusual times when you should go to your boss' manager, or the Human Resources Manager. Here is a listing of those times:

If your company is on the line. There is an urgent matter that your manager continues to ignore. To save the company, you must go beyond your boss.

You must tell an officer of the company, or your boss' manager, if your boss is doing something illegal. (For example, stealing from the company)

You must talk to the Human Resources Manager or your boss' manager if your boss has a serious physical illness, mental illness, or drug addiction that you are aware of.

You must talk to the Human Resources Manager if your boss is doing something that exposes the company for a lawsuit, for example, sexual harassment.

Be very careful with these matters, as they are quite serious. You should keep the information highly confidential, only discussing it with the Human Resources manager, your manager's manager, or an officer of the company. Document your conversation with that person in email, and save a copy for yourself.

We hope you'll never have a manager that you cannot trust enough to speak openly and work together. If you do, and you're unable to talk or work through it you may need to request a transfer.

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MORE STUPID SPORTS QUOTES

Shaquille O'Neal, on his lack of championships: "I've won at every level, except college and pro."

Lou Duva, veteran boxing trainer, on the Spartan training regime of heavyweight Andrew Golota: "He's a guy who gets up at six o'clock in the morning regardless of what time it is."

Pat Williams, Orlando Magic general manager, on his team's 7-27 record: "We can't win at home. We can't win on the road.. As general manager, I just can't figure out where else to play." (1992)

From the Vice President--Kay Wittgenstein

It is hard to believe that the holiday season is upon us-but it is! Please plan to join your PEA brothers and sisters for our annual holiday dinner at Mancini's. It is a good way to meet City employees from other departments as well as to learn more about your Association. The Association gets its strength from the involvement of its members!

We were pleased to receive the following letter from one of our members and would like to share it with you. Sometimes a union or association is like insurance-we don't appreciate it until we actually need it. Take good care of yourself and happy holidays.

**Learning about Labor and Human Rights ...the hard way
(or the importance of having an Union)**

It was Friday, 6 p.m. on one of the last weekends of the summer. I was about to leave the office when all of the sudden the incident with my supervisor occurred. I was shocked and in disbelief. It was not the first time that my supervisor had an outburst against one of the staff in the department, but this time he went too far. While driving back home, I couldn't stop thinking: aren't there labor rights that protect my employment? Isn't the point of human rights to respect all people in the first place?

I was confronting a difficult situation. On the one hand, I was aware that I was entitled to labor protections in the workplace and human rights that protect my dignity as a person. On the other hand, the idea of facing the hardships of a labor dispute and eventually returning to a disruptive work environment was not very appealing. Should I resign and let it go, or stand up and defend my rights? What should I do? I was fortunate, because, in addition to the invaluable support of my family - especially my wonderful wife Amy - and friends, I HAVE A UNION!, and with the assistance of my union I was able to make it through this painful situation.

I contacted my union steward, Regina Ettol, and the union's attorney, Mike Wilde, and, somehow to my welcome surprise, they both called me back immediately. Over the course of the next few weeks, I got assistance from Mike, who listened to me, assisted me to clarify my goals and how the union could best help me meet these goals, guided me through the process of presenting a formal grievance, prepared me for the discussion and negotiation with the City, and advised me on the merits of various possible courses of action that I could take. At the end, he was able to work out a favorable settlement on my behalf.

Ironically, I have worked professionally for over fifteen years to investigate and educate about labor and human rights abuses and provide assistance and education to their victims. Based on this experience, I can say that I am well aware of both the physical and emotional hardships attached to any labor dispute. However, on that Friday night, the defending and protecting human rights took on a new meaning: I was not providing advice. Rather, I was the "subject" of the labor problem. On the positive side, I would say that this has been a powerful personal learning experience. It has been a tough one though. I learned first hand, in a very personal way, something that was already part of my basic belief: the importance of having a strong and able union representation in the face of adverse employment conditions. As for my supervisor, I hope he too learned from this experience. Regardless, my colleagues and I should feel confident that we have a Union, PEA, ready to stand up on our behalf.

**A FEW MORE STUPID
SPORTS QUOTES**

Frank Layden, Utah Jazz president, on a former player: "I told him, 'Son, what is it with you. Is it ignorance or apathy?' He said, 'Coach, I don't know and I don't care.'" (1991)

Torrin Polk, University of Houston receiver, on his coach, John Jenkins: "He treats us like men. He lets us wear earrings." (1991)

Shelby Metcalf, basketball coach at Texas A&M, recounting what he told a player who received four F's and one D: "Son, looks to me like you're spending too much time on one subject." (1987)

PEA General Membership Meeting Agenda

PEA's general membership meeting will be held Wednesday, December 5, 2007, at Mancini's Restaurant, 531 W. Seventh St., St. Paul

Everyone in attendance will receive a PEA gift.

Schedule

5:30 pm	Social Time
6:00 sharp	Dinner
6:30 pm	Meeting

Agenda

1. Introduction of first timers, stewards and executive committee members in attendance
2. Adoption of [minutes from the June 6, 2007, General Membership meeting](#)
3. Legal Counsel Update - Mike Wilde
4. Committee Reports
 - President
 - Vice President
 - Personnel
 - Treasurer
 - Negotiations (City)
 - Negotiations (School District)
5. Election for all PEA Board positions
6. Member of the Year Award
7. Old Business
8. New Business – New on call policy between PEA and City of St. Paul Employees
9. A chance to win one of eight Target gift certificates
10. Adjourn

Reservations Requested

RSVP to Kay Wittgenstein (651-266-1285 or kay.wittgenstein@co.ramsey.mn.us) on or before **December 1, 2007**.

Please give your name, department, and dinner choice (chicken, steak, or fish).

If you have special dietary needs please let Kay know when making your reservation.

Note:

Only regular members may vote and participate full in the Association. If you are a “fair share” individual, please consider becoming a regular member today so you can become an active participant in your union.