



PROFESSIONAL VIEW

PEA'S NEWSLETTER FOR APRIL-JUNE 2009

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SUMMER 2009 PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Submitted by John F. Blackstone, President

The Executive Committee is painfully aware of the impacts that the financial situation will have on our members. I recently spoke with a colleague about layoff procedures. This fellow member is concerned about being laid off. A member told us that they were being laid off effective July 1, 2009 during the June General Membership meeting. It is difficult to either watch a colleague whom you have worked side by side being laid off or know that there is a high probability that you might be laid off.

PEA is a union with specific responsibility to our members. With the knowledge that there are going to be layoffs the Executive Committee has focused on those responsibilities. As issues arise we rigorously discuss them with the intent of clarifying PEA's roles and responsibilities. We ask the question, "How do we bring value to our membership?" Because each committee member knows that everyone will listen to them they are not afraid to be brutally candid. When everyone knows that their comments will be very seriously considered then the Executive Committee can make a decision so that we can "Speak With One Voice"

A challenge to work with employers was expressed at the March Informational Meeting. This is a sticky issue for several reasons. PEA has an agreement with the City of Saint Paul which was approved by

the membership. The Executive Committee is confined to the letter of the contract. And the meeting was to inform members. The challenge was to ask other bargaining units if they were considering actions to ameliorate potential layoffs. An informal query was conducted with two unions. Neither was making plans to or expressed interest in pursuing the notion raised at the March meeting. Council President Lantry and two council members invited all City of Saint Paul Unions to a meeting in April. President Lantry stated that the Council felt in light of the high potential for layoffs that the Council wanted to inform folks of the costs of the current contracts and ask if the Unions had any suggestions or recommendations. After their presentation Council President Lantry and her colleagues left the room to allow bargaining units to discuss the information she had presented. After a very short discussion where several union representatives expressed strong rejection of the proposal by the Council President the meeting concluded. The Executive Committee will involve the membership in anything that would require action outside the contract.

I visited with Department of Safety and Inspection (DSI) formerly License Inspection Environmental Protection (LIEP) members for an informal noon luncheon in their new offices. PEA provided the pizza and pop and the members and I discussed a

President's Update (con.)

range of issues. The meeting was very helpful because I heard what is on members' minds and had the opportunity to meet folks. I am offering to meet at the convenience of stewards and members.

I was pleased with attendance at the June General Membership Meeting. We

were able to update members on the current issues before us and respond to concerns and comments. We continue to receive questions and comments from members. Two way dialogue between the Executive Committee and members is always important but more so right now.

2009 Calendar of Events

September 9 Combined Stewards Board meeting at Josephs Grill on Robert Street 5:30 PM

December General Membership Meeting with elections date and location to be determined.

Sue Butler—An Introduction

My name is Sue Butler, and I have worked as a medical technologist in the Public Health laboratory at the Juenemann Building for 14 years. I began working for the City of St. Paul after going through a layoff from HealthEast when they down-sized in the early 90s. I fully understand the anxiety many of our peers are now experiencing.

My husband of 25 years also works for the city in St. Paul Fire. We have 3 children currently in college, high school and grade school. Some leisure time activities I enjoy are sewing, camping and gardening.

I anticipate greater union involvement as we face more challenges ahead together, and I hope to contribute in a positive way in this new role of steward.

**PEA's Membership as of May 18, 2009 and since our last
General Membership Meeting in December 2008
Submitted by Page DeLong, Personnel Chair**

Totals: 305 Members

City: 232

Schools: 73

Welcome New Members:

1. Timothy Bagstad, Water Labor
2. Katherine Reilly, PED
3. Adam Niblick, CAO
4. Chantell Higgins-Bless, CAO
5. Maya A. Sheikh-Salah, Human Rights
6. Julia Sobania, PW Office
7. Benjamin Hawkins, PW Office
8. Dominic Mitchell, CAO
9. Marshall Turner, PED
10. May Yang, Schools
11. Sheri Fox, Schools
12. Tuan Ngo, OT/IS
13. Clifford Moore, Financial Services
14. Samnang In, OT/IS
15. Roberta Decrans, Police
16. Kari Kline, Police
17. Patricia Nedegaard, Water Office
18. Joshua Williams, PED
19. Patricia Norwig, Schools
20. Kimberly Kershek, CAO
21. Mayla Yang, OFS
22. Joseph Musolf, PED
23. Anton Jerve, PED
24. Catherine Penkert, Parks
25. Jennefer G. Hill, Libraries
26. Bree Peterson, CAO
27. Mandy Ritchie, Schools
28. Karl Mueller, Parks
29. Jason Worka, Schools
30. Thomas Watkins, Schools
31. Kathleen Heyman, Schools
32. Justin Hennes, Schools
33. Kari-Ann Ediger, Schools
34. Kiel Schmitz, Schools
35. Stephanie Kappel, Parks
36. Neelam Sethi, Schools
37. Annette Evans, Schools
38. Kelsey Hertel, Schools
39. Jonathan Klinkenberg, Schools

**Departing Members (promotion, retirement,
resignation or lay off):**

1. Shelley Woodbeck, Pub. Health
2. Susan McMahon, Libraries
3. Anna Prettyman, CAO
4. Kari Dennison, Parks
5. Jonathan Carpenter, Schools
6. Aaron Curti, Schools
7. Amy Moser, Schools
8. Angel Burkhalter, PED
9. Norma Cheesebrow, Pub. Health
10. Joe Pew, CAO
11. Kurt Schultz, PED
12. Karen Kendall, Parks Labor
13. Mary Ellen Smith, Pub. Health
14. Linda Valen, Libraries
15. Karen Koeppe, Libraries
16. Allen Carlson, PED
17. Patricia Lilledahl, PED
18. Thomas Sanchez, PED
19. Kay Wittgenstein, Pub. Health
20. Paula Henry, Pub. Health
21. Tracy Moe, Public Works
22. Ellen Black, Parks
23. Roger Anderson, OTC
24. Rebecca Stenberg, Parks
25. Sandra Haustein
26. Donna Drummond, PED
27. Lucie Passus, OTC
28. Susan Myran, Pub. Health

PEA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
Black Bear Crossings on the Lake - aka Como Lake Pavilion
December 3, 2008

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: David Peterson, President; Kay Wittgenstein, Vice President; John Blackstone, Treasurer; Karin Anderson, Personnel Chair; Maia Sierra, School District Negotiations Chair; Paul Hogrefe, City Negotiations Chair; Brian Krawiecki, Secretary and Mike Wilde, Legal Counsel.

STEWARDS: Frank Berg, Kathleen Conger, Regina Etoll, Lyla Griffin, Salam Hamid, Susan Henry, Susan McMahon, Susan Myran, Craig O'Brien, Marsha Panos, Paula Peterson, Brian Tourtelotte and Bill Vos.

OTHER PEA MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE INCLUDED: Mary Ann Berglund, Sue Butler, Jennifer Carpenter, Page DeLong, Susan Feuerherm, RoseAnn Foreman, Jim Giebel, Cece Hauge, Marcelle Hawkins, Marian Heinrichs, Paula Henry, Susan Henry, Kelly Hervin, Jenny Hill, Martha Hill, Patricia James, Jennifer Jannetto, Jim Jeffery, Corinne Juve, Brian Karshnia, Kathy Korf, Fong Lor, Barbara McMonigal-St. Dennis, Michael Marmsoler, Pam Mendez, Mike Michaud, Geoff Miller, Barb Morin, Diane Olson, Peter Panos, Lucie Passus, Dennis Peterson, Ruth Richardson, Therese Scherbel, Colleen Shields, George Simon, Greg Simpson, Barb Sippel, Michael Tharp, Jodi Wallin, Casey Walters and Chin-Ming Yin.

INTRODUCTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND STEWARDS: Executive Committee Members and Stewards were introduced.

MINUTES FROM THE JUNE 4, 2008 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING: The minutes from the June 4, 2008 General Membership Meeting were presented. **MOTION** by Kathleen Conger to adopt the June 4, 2008 General Membership Meeting minutes as presented. **SECOND** by Kathy Korf, **MOTION CARRIED.**

LEGAL COUNSEL UPDATE: Mike emphasized the value of PEA members' enthusiasm to come forward to advance union issues. He went on to give an overview of the Executive Board decision process and PEA's successful efforts to win grievances.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

President: David gave an update and overview of the city mileage issue.

Vice President: Kay reviewed health insurance and health spending account requirements and encouraged members to become active in PEA.

Treasurer: John reported PEA's fund balance to be \$137,970.33.

Personnel: Karin gave a special good-bye to Susan McMahon and encouraged members to show up for her going-away party.

Karin mentioned the hiring freeze announced by Mayor Coleman and reported a membership number of approximately 300 employees in PEA with 65 of those in the School District. Karin thanked the attendees and candidates for the personnel chair position.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: (continued)

City Negotiations: Paul asked for ideas to educate members about the benefits that members may not be taking advantage of, such as the \$250 deferred compensation match.

School District Negotiations: Maia mentioned the current School District health insurance plans will be updated for 2010.

PEA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELECTIONS: Mike Wilde facilitated the PEA Executive Committee election process. Mike asked for nominations from the floor for president. There were no nominations for president. John Blackstone agreed to be the president for 2009 and was elected by white ballot. Karin Anderson agreed to run for the Vice President position. Mike asked for nominations from the floor for Vice President. Hearing no floor nominations, Karin was elected by white ballot. Maia Sierra agreed to run for Treasurer. Mike asked for nominations from the floor for Treasurer. Hearing none, Maia was elected by white ballot. Paul Hogrefe agreed to stay on as City Negotiations Chair. Mike asked for nominations from the floor. Hearing none, Paul was elected by white ballot. David Peterson agreed to run for ISD Negotiations Chair. Mike asked for nominations from the floor. Hearing none, David was elected by white ballot. Brian Krawiecki agreed to stay on as Secretary. Mike asked for nominations from the floor. Hearing none, Brian was elected by white ballot. Candidates for the Personnel Chair included Page DeLong, Marsha Panos, Lucie Passus, Michael Tharp and Brian Tourtelotte. The candidates introduced themselves and gave campaign speeches. Ballots were distributed, collected and tallied. Page DeLong was elected Personnel Chair.

PEA MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD:

Kay Wittgenstein was honored as 2008 PEA Member of The Year.

OLD BUSINESS: None was discussed.

NEW BUSINESS: Mike congratulated Susan McMahon on her retirement and thanked and praised her for her service to PEA as steward for the Library members. Mike thanked David for serving as PEA's president and commended him on his exemplary service to PEA members.

John thanked members for attending and thanked Kay and David for their service on the Executive Board. John welcomed Page to the Executive Board.

Target gift certificates were awarded to: Jim Jeffery, Sue Myron, Page DeLong, Sue Feuerherm, Craig O'Brien, Paula Henry, Colleen Shields, Regina Etoll, Corinne Juve, Marsha Panos, Mike Michaud, Bill Vos, Kay Wittgenstein, Susan McMahon, Michael Tharp, Jennifer Jannetto and Marian Heinrichs.

ADJOURNMENT: MOTION by Karin Anderson to adjourn. SECOND by Kay Wittgenstein, MOTION CARRIED. Meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

THE CORNER

By Mike Wilde, Legal Counsel

Over the past few months it seems like PEA's business affairs on behalf of its members has been a study in acronyms. For example, we are addressing the LMCHI, HRAs, VEBAs, LGA, RIFs and MOUs to name a few. Keep in mind these abbreviated issues are only a few months after we grappled with the GOP and their VIPs and RSVP parties. But each of these acronyms is worth discussing because most of you will be affected by their existence.

First, we should address how they will impact our benefits in PEA. St. Paul and its various labor organizations have long met in collaborative fashion to address employees' health care needs. The forum for such an effort is in the form of a Labor Management Committee (LMC). The LMC is not unique to St. Paul. In fact, LMC's have flourished in the greater metropolitan area since 1986 when former Minneapolis Mayor Don Fraser founded the Twin Cities Area Labor Management Council (TCALMC), which promotes positive and cooperative labor management relations. St. Paul has been extremely effective in carrying out this goal, along with its unions, for approximately 20 years.

Our specific LMC focuses on health insurance and has appropriately been named the LMCHI. Personally, I am a strong supporter of this organization because I remember what happened when it had a brief hiatus. In the mid 90's, when Mayor Norm Coleman was taking a rather unpleasant position towards the City employees' benefit package, many of the Unions dropped out of participation. Our discontinuance was in protest to what was viewed as a "less than collaborative" approach to health insurance. Our stance might have been rooted in principle, but practically it was not very good. Our members were surprised and shocked at some of the changes that Norm implemented at the time. I remember because I was recently hired by PEA and I took many of the phone calls from angry employees who wanted to know why the Union allowed these changes and why there was no notice to the

employees. The lesson was clear: Don't ever forfeit participation in a process that gives you a voice.

Since those times, the Unions have occupied their designated seat at the table and become better informed on the health insurance marketplace and all of its challenges, while providing a firm voice for the healthcare needs of its members and their families. Currently, the LMCHI is exploring a Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) that takes advantage of pre-tax dollars that will be contributed by the City to employees who take advantage of the high-deductible health insurance option. The HRA option will not only allow employees and the City to avoid tax liabilities on those contributions, but the employees will be given an individual account that can accumulate over time to defray a broad array of health care needs, including premiums. For those wise employees who are strategizing on how to meet healthcare costs into retirement, or after leaving the City's employment, this fund gives them a protected and portable account that will help in the goal. One of the main advantages of the HRA over the current FSA (Flexible Spending Account) is that it has no use-it-or-lose-it consequence at year's end. PEA members will also avoid the harsh result of losing the contribution by a simple enrollment mistake.

These contributions, as guaranteed in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the City, will be made directly into a Voluntary Employees' Beneficiary Association (VEBA), which is a tax-exempt trust authorized by Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(9). The tax objective of this type of plan are to enable your employer to make tax-free deposits on your behalf to the Plan, to credit your account with tax-free investment earnings and to enable you to obtain tax-free reimbursements for your qualified medical expenses and insurance premium payments. The LMCHI is diligently preparing the necessary documents, including the HRA plan, the VEBA Trust Agreement with US Bank and the VEBA Committee by-laws to

comply with the applicable laws and make this benefit become a reality. But it is important to note that this project is not yet complete and remains a work in progress. This article is only intended to update you on PEA's efforts, along with all the other LMCHI members. Details will follow in months to come. We believe this is a positive step for all members who are planning for future healthcare realities.

On another front lies the grim issue of our Governor's approach to LGA (Local Government Aid). It is hard to imagine a public servant in Minnesota who has not heard of the Governor's pledge to resolve the State's budget crisis on his own. In short, he has communicated that he will likely unallot dollars that have been committed to local government units, like St. Paul. In short, further cuts are almost guaranteed. More cuts from an already bare-bones budget likely means layoffs. To use more sterile language, it means a reduction in force (RIF). But sterile language doesn't make it any easier when it is your job that is cut and your economic future that is affected.

Mayor Chris Coleman has been as transparent and open about this situation as anyone can expect. I attended a meeting with the Mayor just a day before writing this article. Although the news is bleak, he is forthright about the issues we face and genuinely concerned about his City and its workers. The Governor's decisions are not expected to be announced until probably June 30th so the damage will not be known until then. And it is pretty hard to hold this Governor to anything, including his own deadlines. But ... the Mayor did encourage everyone to contact the Governor to offer their input. After all, he is asking for feedback. It is our civic duty to provide it. So call the Governor at (651) 296-3391 and tell him what you think about cutting jobs, cutting LGA, eliminating services and his go-it-alone approach. If you think an email would be better suited than write tim.pawlenty@state.mn.us. Be professional, but take action. He's asking for the public to weigh in on these important issues. There is no excuse not to oblige.

2009 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT	JOHN BLACKSTONE	WATER - 1900 Rice St., 55113	266-6324
VICE PRES.	KARIN ANDERSON	CAO - 750 City Hall, 15 W. Kellogg, 55102	266-8765
TREASURER	MAIA SIERRA	SCHOOLS - 360 Colborne St., 55102	767-8269
SECRETARY	BRIAN KRAWIECKI	DSI - 8 E. 4 th St., #200, 55101	266-9134
NEGOTIATIONS			
CITY	PAUL HOGREFE	OT/IS-210 City Hall, 15 W Kellogg, 55102	266-6783
SCHOOL	DAVID PETERSON	SCHOOLS - 360 Colborne, 55102	696-9629
PERSONNEL	PAGE DELONG	RAMSEY PUBLIC HEALTH	266-1321

STEWARDS

CAO & OFS	REGINA ETOLL	500 City Hall, 15 W. Kellogg, 55102	266-8726
FIRE	PAULA PETERSON	100 E. 11 th St., 55101	228-6203

LIBRARIES

	SUSAN HENRY	MMC, 2109 Wilson Ave., 55119	501-6310
	KATHLEEN CONGER	Rice Street, 1011 Rice St., 55117	558-2223
	CHARLENE McKENZIE	Rondo, 461 Dale St., 55103	266-7419
DSI/HR	FRANK BERG	375 Jackson St., Suite 200, 55101	266-9072
OTC/IS	GALE HAWKINSON	210 City Hall, 15 W Kellogg, 55102	266-6781
PARKS & REC	BRIAN TOURTELOTTE	50 W. Kellogg, Suite 840, 55102	266-6414
P.E.D.	CRAIG O'BRIEN	1200 CH Annex, 25 W. 4 th St., 55102	266-6695
POLICE	MARSHA PANOS	367 Grove St., 55101	266-5781
PUB. HEALTH	SUE BUTLER	555 Cedar St., 55102	266-1321
PUB. WORKS	BILL VOS	900 CH Annex, 25 W. 4 th St., 55102	266-6113
SCHOOL DIST.	LYLA GRIFFIN	360 Colborne, 55102	767-8288
SCHOOL DIST.	LISA JONES	1001 Johnson Parkway, 55107	793-1344
WATER	SALAM HAMID	WATER - 1900 Rice St., 55113	266-1632

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