



PROFESSIONAL VIEW

PEA'S NEWSLETTER FOR JANUARY-MARCH, 2010

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MARCH 2010 PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Submitted by John F. Blackstone, P.E., President

Congratulations to Regina Etoll on being selected as the PEA member of the year. When her name was mentioned as a possible candidate the Board was very enthusiastic about her nomination. Stewards are the backbone of our organization. Her selection is well deserved from hard work and dedication.

I like going to work every day, I enjoy what I do and I am grateful to have a position that makes a difference. I feel privileged to serve on the Professional Employees Association Board. I am honored to be reelected. Last year was exciting. Sometimes it was like trying to take a drink from a fire hose. Fortunately the Board is comprised of very hard working dedicated individuals who work together to assure that the decisions they make benefit members. Working with folks like that is very rewarding. There is great satisfaction gained from a decision that comes after frank, candid focused discussion. The candid discussion helps everyone have a better understanding of the issue and contribute to the decision. It also helps keep the focus on what is best for our members.

PEA has stepped up and worked hard to bring value to our members. This year we increased

compensation to Board members particularly the Vice President because of the important work required by that position and the By-Laws state that the Vice President fills the President position if the President leaves office. Remuneration must be adequate to attract and retain a qualified candidate. PEA members have gained much from the previous and current Vice Presidents. We are asking and needing more from our legal counsel. As we look toward the future we see the need to increase dues so that we can continue to provide the level of service and dedication that PEA members have come to expect. Out dues have been twenty dollars a month for many years. They are the lowest of any Union that we know. The Board will be considering this issue with our usual rigorous debate.

The School Board Negotiations Team is working hard to obtain member input and develop a negotiations strategy. I hope the cohesiveness of the Board is an asset to this process. I am proud of the effort the Negotiations Team is making to move this issue forward. I am looking forward to 2010. Wishing you the best.

PEA CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2010

Tuesday, March 2

Combined Stewards/Board Meeting at Joseph's Grill,
140 South Wabasha, 5:30 pm

Wednesday, June 2
Wednesday, Sept. 8

General Membership Meeting at Joseph's Grill, 5:30 pm
Combined Stewards/Board Mtg. at Joseph's Grill, 5:30 pm

Tuesday, Nov. 30

General Membership Meeting at Mancini's Restaurant,
531 W. 7th St., 5:30 pm

School District PEA Negotiation Team Meetings
By David Peterson

The School district negotiation team consists of School District Negotiation Chair David Peterson, Legal counsel Mike Wilde, PEA Treasurer Maia Sierra, Steward Marian Heinrichs, and Steward Jennifer Carpenter.

The current PEA school district bargaining agreement is for the 2008 and 2009 calendar years. Terms continue until a new contract is agreed to by PEA and the School District.

The negotiation team has been meeting and reviewing bargaining information from various sources in preparation for negotiations with the school district.

Currently, the negotiation team is preparing a request proposal. This request will include salary increase, health insurance premium district contribution increase, professional growth reimbursement adjustment, consideration of proposed term changes, and clarifying contract language.

School District PEA members will hear more as the negotiation process continues.

If you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact me at 612-414-2768 (cell) or 651-696-9626 (office).

REGINA ETOLL
2009 MEMBER OF THE YEAR
Submitted by Page DeLong

Congratulations to Regina Etoll, our 2009 member of the year. Regina was chosen by unanimous vote of the PEA executive board for her role as our steward for the City Attorney's Office, Office of Financial Services, Human Rights & Equal Economic Opportunity, Mayor's Office, Council Research and Human Resources. On more than one occasion this year she has dealt with highly charged employment situations on behalf of members in her steward group. Regina interjects herself into the process without complaint, giving early counsel to her PEA members and later providing an independent assessment of situations that require legal counsel involvement. PEA is fortunate to have stewards like Regina. She is a good advocate with strong independent judgment.

Regina has lived in the Twin Cities her entire life and has worked as a Legal Assistant in the Criminal Division of the City Attorney's Office for ten years. Stewardship for PEA has enabled Regina to assist co-workers, even if it has just meant listening to them. The camaraderie and working relationship with stewards from other city departments has also been a satisfying aspect of PEA involvement. Regina recently obtained a Master of Arts in Management (MAM) and an MBA from The College of St. Scholastica. In her spare time, Regina enjoys Nintendo Wii, knitting, crocheting, rooting for the Chicago Bears and dreaming of warmer climates.



THE CORNER

By Mike Wilde, Legal Counsel

I would like to start my newsletter article with a sincere Thank You to all of PEA members who attended the Holiday Party/General Membership Meeting at Mancini's Steak House. For as long as I can remember, PEA has hosted a dinner for its members at a quality restaurant in St. Paul, which is most often Mancini's. It is open to any member who wants to attend and the gathering has three obvious benefits: 1) PEA conducts annual business, including the election of new officers, 2) the PEA members get to socialize at a holiday event and 3) everyone is fed a very nice meal. There are also the comprehensive updates from each Committee member on the development of union issues and an opportunity to leave with a great door prize and holiday gift cards drawn at random for attending members.

I'm extremely thankful for the Executive Committee keeping this tradition alive, especially when no other labor organization that I know of offers a free dinner to all of its members every year (I should note that PEA also does this every June with a bit smaller turnout). But I also want to thank the individuals who attended. There was a great turnout this year and a festive mood helped make for a very enjoyable evening. Thanks!

The December and June membership meetings are not the only things that set PEA aside, and above, as a quality labor organization. Every spring and fall PEA holds similar gatherings for the stewards to attend. These steward meetings usually go a little longer, but they are filled with more training and educational topics to prepare our stewards to become better "eyes and ears" for our members. PEA also maintains a private, yet modest, office suite in downtown St. Paul that is conveniently located for both City and School District members. On top of that, PEA maintains an effectively simple website that posts important documents and other links for our members' benefit (check out www.peaonline.org). In addition, there is the periodic newsletter that educates, informs and sometimes humors our members through its publication about four times per year.

These service avenues are the efforts that PEA makes to merely communicate to its members. The communication is critical, however, to inform you of the work done on your behalf. For both the City and School District professionals, we are negotiating your employment contracts, constantly addressing new issues through interim negotiations (MOU's) and enforcing the terms of those contracts to ensure consistent and accurate compliance. This work requires the Committee as a whole to investigate, question, research and advocate on matters that affect our members and their professional careers. With approximately 300 employees in the PEA bargaining units, these efforts are full-time, year-round and growing.

But you should be encouraged to know that PEA serves you at the very lowest per member cost of any bargaining unit that we know of in either the City or District.

After digging into the dues structure of your co-workers, PEA has learned that every other known labor organization charges their members more in monthly dues than PEA does. Usually it is considerably more – and most often the employees are paid less than our average members. If you doubt this, ask your co-workers in AFSCME, SPSO, the Teachers' Union, the Police, Fire or any of the Trades how much they pay in monthly dues. I'm not trying to stir up trouble, but rather demonstrate to you that your dues dollars are stretched to the limit and your elected officers, who are just co-workers, take their roles seriously when spending other peoples' money.

You might ask "how have we stayed so low compared to other unions?" First, consider that PEA is not affiliated with an International Union. Therefore, any change in expenses or dues are done at the local level, not out in Washington D.C. Second, your Executive Committee watches every dime spent on your behalf. They recently eliminated the office phone line because communication was better established through other means. Years ago they bought the large office copier for \$1.00 because the lease was satisfied and the Committee would not fall prey to the leasing agent's attempts to re-sign a

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new contract. Third, PEA has absolutely no political expenses. We don't engage in campaign finance efforts, or the expense associated with having hired lobbyists. Fourth, all reserves are held in certificates of deposit with staggered maturity dates to keep assets protected yet relatively liquid. Fifth, PEA has recognized itself as a service organization – part of that service is doing as much as is reasonably practical within our resources.

Does this mean that every PEA member is totally satisfied? No. In fact, there are always those who will only evaluate an organization based on the immediate and direct gain that they can see to themselves. But it is enjoyable to watch some individuals “reconsider” their position when they

have benefited from a pay grievance, or a class-action job study, or health insurance benefits that were otherwise going to be lost without union input. For others who are opposed to their public union, they probably give little thought to how the pay structure has developed over the last 25 years. It has been COLLECTIVE BARGAINING. Not all years are great, some aren't even good, but it is much better to have a seat at the table to discuss your earnings ... than to wait around and be told what you will accept.

By the way, when you ask your co-workers about their dues, don't ask how many times their union invites them to dine at Mancini's. Some questions just create hard feelings.

***DRAFT Minutes from the DECEMBER 2, 2009 General Membership Meeting
The draft below needs approval from the General Membership at the June Meeting.***

PEA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING Mancini's December 2, 2009

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

STEWARDS: Frank Berg, Jennifer Carpenter, Kathleen Conger, Regina Etoll, Gale Hawkinson, Marian Heinrichs, Susan Henry, Craig O'Brien, Marsha Panos, Paula Peterson, Brian Tourtelotte and Bill Vos.

OTHER PEA MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Issac Afwerke, Mary Ann Berglund, Joe Blomquist, Jim Brewer, Mary Calvo, Jennifer Carpenter, Joan Chinn, Jeff Cummings, Roberta DeCrans, Peg Doheny, Susan Feuerherm, Jim Giebel, Elena Grinberg, Cece Hauge, Shelly Hawkins, Doug Hempel, Kelly Hervin, Jennifer Jannetto, Jim Jeffery, Brian Karschnia, Greg Kelley, Mark Kile, spJon Klinkenberg, Kathy Korf, John Larson, Fong Lor, Kari McDermott, Barbara McMonigal-St.Dennis, Pam Mendez, Mark Moody, Barb Morin, Patty Norwig, Jordan Nguyen, Kieuoanh Nguyen, Sara Nurmela, Diane Olson, Bill Pesek, Ruth Richardson, Katy Schulz, George Simon, Greg Simpson, Barbara Sippel, Julia Sobania, Elizabeth Stiffler, Michael Tharp, Kha Vang, Jodi Wallin, Casey Walters, Angie Wiese and Maly Yang.

INTRODUCTIONS: John welcomed attendees and asked PEA members to introduce themselves to one another.

MINUTES FROM THE JUNE 3, 2009 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING: The minutes from the June 3, 2009 General Membership Meeting were presented. MOTION by Pam Mendez to adopt the June 3, 2009 General Membership Meeting minutes as presented. SECOND by Mark Kile, MOTION CARRIED.

LEGAL COUNSEL UPDATE: Mike gave an overview of how the City LMCHI developed the City's Voluntary Employees Beneficiary Association Plan (VEBA) for Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA). PEA's role in the process was instrumental to the final development of the Agreement. The Unions successfully negotiated to have the City pay for the administrative costs to set up the VEBA. Mike has agreed to be the Chairperson of the VEBA Trust Account Committee. This is a very important position because the Unions have all fiduciary responsibilities for the trust account and will ensure PEA's role as a leader in the future of the VEBA.

Mike gave a review of PEA's success with the grievances that have occurred throughout the past year. He also reminded members in attendance of the importance of PEA's Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the City and County to protect members seniority rights when they transferred to County employment and how an MOA within the Libraries saved a member from layoff.

Mike recognized the PEA Stewards gave special commendations and thanks to the Stewards for their efforts and all the work they do on behalf of PEA members.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

President: John recognized Issac Afwerke for his recent military deployment overseas and welcomed him back to his position with the Saint Paul Regional Water Department.

Vice President: Karin reviewed the activities of the City LMCHI and the development of the City VEBA HRA Plan. The LCMHI will be reviewing proposals for a Health Insurance provider and will be making a recommendation to the City for the next Health Insurance provider. The City is in the process of rewriting job descriptions to have better integration into job matrices. The language in the job matrices is focused on how an employee does their job at the same time the language has to describe the job. The PEA Strategic Plan will be reviewed in March by the PEA Executive Board. The PEA Strategic Plan was implemented last year to keep PEA moving in a positive direction.

Treasurer: Maia reported PEA's fund balance to be in excess of \$133,000.00.

Personnel: Page reported there to be 297 PEA members, 229 in the City and 68 in the School District, with only 34 fair share members in the City and 3 fair share members in the School District. Page welcomed two new Stewards in the School District, Jennifer Carpenter and Marian Heinrichs.

City Negotiations: The current City contract continues through 2010. Paul asked members to let him know what they would like to see in the next contract. He also asked members to identify the benefits that they provide to the City so he can bolster arguments for increases in the next contract.

School District Negotiations: The School District has a new Superintendent, Valeria Silva. David was part of the Labor Committee to interview the new Superintendent. David identified for Ms. Silva that an important issue for PEA is equity in layoffs with the teachers. The Negotiations Committee is developing a proposal for the 2010-2011 PEA Contract and they are closely monitoring the Teacher's Contract as the PEA Contract has paralleled the Teachers Contract in previous negotiations.

ELECTIONS: Mike Wilde facilitated the PEA Executive Committee election process. The current Executive Committee has agreed to run for their current positions. Mike asked for nominations for Executive Committee positions from the floor. There were no nominations presented from the floor. The current Executive Committee was reinstated in their current positions for 2010 by majority approval. John Blackstone, President; Karin Anderson, Vice President; Maia Sierra, Treasurer; Page DeLong, Personnel Chair; David Peterson, School District Negotiations Chair; Paul Hogrefe, City Negotiations Chair and Brian Krawiecki, Secretary.

PEA MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD:

Regina Etohl was honored as 2009 PEA Member of The Year.

AMENDMENTS TO THE PEA BY LAWS: John presented the proposed PEA By Law Amendments recommended for approval by the Executive Committee. John opened the floor for comment and discussion on the proposed By Law Amendments. No comment or discussion was offered. The proposed By Law Amendments were approved by majority vote.

Door prizes were awarded to; George Simon, Angie Wiese, Paula Peterson, Jim Brewer, Barb Sippel, Diane Olson, Bill Pesek, Kelly Hervin, Kathy Korf, Barb Morin, Gale Hawkinson, Jennifer Jannetto, Mary Calvo, Jodi Wallin, Shelly Hawkins and Julia Sobania.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

2010 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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