



PROFESSIONAL VIEW

PEA'S NEWSLETTER FOR JULY-SEPTEMBER, 2010

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SEPTEMBER 2010 PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

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

I love my job because I have an opportunity to use my experience and education in a variety of ways to serve the public. I love being a member of the PEA Executive Committee because I have a chance to exercise my leadership skills. I wish everyone was as fortunate as I am. My career in Public Service is rewarding and fulfilling. It is a pleasure and an honor to serve with an Executive Committee and legal counsel who are professional, respectful and dedicated. The Executive Committee is focused on the business pertinent to PEA goals and mission. We know this requires rigorous evaluation and candid conversation. We know it requires the Public and PEA members trust and respect. We know we are charged with providing clear concise leadership. And we know that after rigorous debate everyone must support the majority rule

Majority rule can be a tricky business. If a majority vote is 50.1% to 49.9%, I would question whether the PEA Executive Committee has a mandate to move forward. In other situations, the most recent Minnesota Senate Race for example was decided by a small margin. In contrast a situation with a vote of 6 in favor and 1 opposed after thorough discussion and understanding of why one was opposed is in many cases an good indication of a decisive majority. Rigorous discussion is helpful in finding a solution that the

majority can support which also brings value to members.

For example, the Executive Committee determined that dues expenses will exceed income at the current dues rate. This means that we will exhaust our reserve in a couple of years. We discussed several alternatives and selected an alternative to raise dues so that income will match expenses in future years and we will be able to maintain an adequate reserve. We recommended a dues increase because we believe that the "Level of Service" PEA offers is appropriate for an organization representing professional employees. Then we brought the information to the June General Membership Meeting so that members would have a chance to understand how the recommendation for a dues increase was developed. Members responded with thoughtful questions and comments which the Executive Committee will use to guide the process. The next step is a vote by members at the November 30, 2010 General Membership meeting. I am very hopeful that you will support the Executive Committee's recommendation for a dues increase.

Respectfully,
John F. Blackstone, P.E.

School District PEA Contract Settlement
By David Peterson

With the School District PEA membership approval vote on June 30th and the School Board approval on July 13th, the School District members have a bargaining agreement contract settlement for the 2010 and 2011 calendar years.

The new bargaining agreement for 2010-2011 will replace the old bargaining agreement for 2008 2009 on the SPPS HR website http://hr.spps.org/Labor_Agreements.html as soon as possible.

The step progressions have been maintained, with a cost of living adjustment of a 1% increase effective July 3, 2010, and of a 1.5% increase effective January 1, 2011, (not covering the 15 and 20 year longevity bonus pay).

Employer health insurance contributions for single coverage increase from \$536 to \$575 effective July 1, 2010, and employer health insurance contributions for family coverage increase from \$1,065 to \$1,125 effective July 1, 2010.

The School District required a substantial reduction of health insurance benefits for all new district employees hired after January 1, 2014, in order for the School District to be eligible for

millions of dollars of extra levy revenue, (which reduces the level of current budget cuts).

The 2010-2011 bargaining agreement is the result of the membership negotiation survey, internal PEA District negotiation team meetings, and five meetings with the negotiation team and the District Labor Relations Office representatives. The negotiation team believes the settlement to be the best possible under the current budget situation.

The school district negotiation team consisted of School District Negotiation Chair David Peterson, Legal Counsel Mike Wilde, PEA Treasurer Maia Sierra, Steward Marian Heinrichs, and Steward Jennifer Carpenter. I thank my colleagues for their time and work on behalf of PEA members.

Perhaps you may want to join the School district negotiation team next time around (starting approximately Fall, 2011).

If you have any negotiation questions or comments, feel free to contact me.

David Peterson
cell phone: 612-414-2768
office phone: 651-696-9626

2011 Officer Elections

Officer elections for 2011 will be held at the General Membership Meeting on November 30, 2010. Only full members are eligible to vote. If you are interested in serving on the PEA Board or you wish to nominate someone to serve on the PEA Board please contact Mike Wilde and or John F. Blackstone, P.E.

PEA CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2010

Wednesday, Sept. 8
Tuesday, Nov. 30

Combined Stewards/Board Mtg. at Joseph's Grill, 5:30 pm
General Membership Meeting at Mancini's Restaurant,
531 W. 7th St., 5:30 pm

THE CORNER

By Mike Wilde, Legal Counsel

When was the last time you had a performance evaluation? It is highly likely that the majority of PEA members reading this newsletter article are either overdue for their annual performance evaluation or they haven't even had an evaluation in years. A lot of employees find some relief in avoiding the face-to-face hour with their immediate supervisor. After all, it is possible that you would hear claims of missed deadlines, communication deficiencies or overall sagging performance. Nobody likes to hear criticism of their work. It is also a possibility that you get anxious or uncomfortable and you say things that are better left unsaid. Maybe you fear a quick temper or think that you'll feel obligated to deflect blame to others in the department. Worse yet, maybe you will start to evaluate the supervisor – which is a whole 'nother kettle of fish and a topic for a future article.

Whatever your reasons for flying under the evaluation radar, you should know that there are several benefits to annual evaluations. **First, a regularly scheduled evaluation from a supervisor intimately familiar with your work generates motivation and satisfaction.** As a professional employee, undoubtedly working in a thinly staffed environment, you are probably given significant autonomy and discretion. There are also a lot of expectations, whether they are express or implied. The worst scenario for the individual is to carry out professional duties in isolation and obscurity. Over time it would be natural to question whether your work is important. Even more damaging would be to draw your own conclusions that "I get my work done with no complaints and, by all appearances, it isn't that important anyway."

An evaluation focuses the supervisor's attention on your duties and their importance to the operation. Most of us probably interpret it more as a focus on us, the individual, because we focus on our own self interests. But a primary focus on the duties can reassure you that the work you do is valuable to the organization. **This naturally motivates most employees to accept the duties as part of the organization,** and an important one. If the duties are discussed and the importance shared between you and the supervisor, then it's on to evaluate how well they are being fulfilled.

The competent fulfillment of important duties serves the organization and needs to be recognized. **This creates job satisfaction.** I can already hear the tightly wound, the public employee critics and the anti-union crowd muttering something to the effect that "*this satisfaction with mere competence is what is wrong with this Country. We should demand excellence.*" [maybe they're not in our readership?]. But let's be honest. "An honest day's pay for an honest day's work" rests on the humanly possible and in reality. To adequately and competently perform the work that is expected of you should carry with it the satisfaction that is important to a healthy organization and work place. There are always superstars, overachievers and perfectionists. God bless 'em and I hope for their immediate promotion. But in regards to evaluations and job satisfaction, they're often left disappointed. Again, evaluations can motivate us and ensure job satisfaction.

Second, a performance evaluation can document areas of proficiency and reveal areas of improvement. These dual benefits cannot be overlooked. When you are meeting expectations and the work is successfully met, it is valuable to have a record of that. New leadership, budget problems and unresolved personality conflicts can all lead to an unfavorable rewriting of history. Without evaluations and the resulting documentation how would you challenge an ambiguous claim that "you've never really met the department's expectations"? Performance evaluations memorialize a good work history. I have represented many employees over the last 15 years who have had employers attempt to gloss over a good work record. Performance evaluations are usually the best indicator of how an individual has truly performed year in and year out.

It is equally important to get early and clear indication of any problem. Performance problems that go unaddressed, usually because the supervisor would rather not face the situation, often times balloon into an irreversible trend. Ignorance is not bliss and if you don't have regular evaluations then you might never know what is jeopardizing your job. It could be something as simple as phone etiquette or as complex as a lack in your critical

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knowledge base for the job. But without learning of the problem, you cannot even begin to correct it. All too often, the problem festers until a supervisor addresses it in a much more intimidating forum than just an evaluation.

Third, during an evaluation your supervisor will likely give you a more defined understanding of direction and changes the department is taking. The old joke in some departments is that “upper management treats us like mushrooms. They feed us sh#*, keep us in the dark and expect us to grow.” But it is my experience that supervisors will share more details with individual employees when it is directly related to their duties. So even when new plans are not ready for announcement, a good supervisor might alert you to an area of emphasis that you can prepare yourself for.

Lastly, a regular scheduled evaluation usually includes an invitation to share your concerns.

Take advantage of this. Anyone who has supervised others will probably agree that someone who routinely runs to management with complaints soon has their remarks dismissed as those of a complainer or gossip. But if your supervisor is seeking your input, your remarks will be taken a lot more seriously. In fact, there might be no better time to share some of your greatest frustrations or concerns in the workplace.

You might very well be overdue for a performance evaluation. But don't take too much comfort in the old adage that “they would tell me if something was wrong.” Instead, take the initiative and ask your supervisor to schedule an evaluation. The benefits are undeniable.

PEA Dues Analysis

Submitted by Paul Hogrefe, City Negotiations Chair

At the June 2nd general membership meeting there was a discussion about dues. Paul H. started the discussion with an overview of why the discussion was necessary. The board feels strongly that PEA is providing a high level of service to its members and in order to continue to provide that level of service we are going to need to raise our dues.

Our expenses are now significantly higher than our income, in large part due to recent increases in our legal council's salary. Mike Wilde has been with PEA since 1996, and we have been paying a “bargain rate” for many of those years. Adjusting his salary to a more competitive, yet not excessive rate of pay has been deliberated and discussed at length by the board. In the end the board decided that Mike's commitment, level of knowledge, and the positive effect he has on our standing with the City and School District are worth it.

PEA dues have not been raised in at least 15 years. PEA dues are also by far the lowest of any union in the City; for example they are less than half of AFSCME Clerical and Technical dues. The PEA board is recommending an increase in dues in two steps: On 1/1/2011 increase by \$5 to \$25/month. Then on 1/1/2012 increase by \$7 to \$32/month.

During the open discussion time many good questions were raised. Several people offered alternatives to the two step approach. Several offered support both for Mike Wilde and the board. At the end of the discussion a non-binding straw poll was held to gauge support for the dues increase, and the response was near unanimous support for the increase. It will be formally voted on at the November 29th general membership meeting. Remember, you have to be a full member to vote. If you are currently fair share and would like to change to full membership please contact Page DeLong.

Report to Membership as of July 15, 2010 and since our last General Membership Meeting in December 2009:

Totals: 310 Members

City: 236 (39 are fair share)

Schools: 74 (4 are fair share)

Welcome New Members:

1. Lucie Passus, HREEO (reinstated)
2. Allen W. Glass, Fire
3. Gessner A. Rivas, HREEO
4. Jeanna B. Sather, CAO
5. Alyssa N. Wetzel-Moore, HREEO
6. Brian P. Joyce, HREEO
7. Diane M. Sweet, OFS
8. Andrew Mosca, Schools
9. Cathleen Hess, Schools
10. Dennielle Handt, Schools
11. Karen Mueller, Schools
12. David Blessing, Parks Labor
13. Mai K. Vang, CAO
14. Rachel Coyle, Parks
15. Jesse J. Mraz, Schools
16. Kristen M. Hageman, Public Works
17. Elizabeth S. Albrecht, Parks
18. Luis C. Morales, HREEO
19. Cuong N. Dang, Schools
20. Thomas A. Bosman, Public Works
21. David A. Ronzani, Parks
22. Rebecca E. Ryan, Libraries
23. Lisa M. Bartels, HREEO
24. Connie M. Garrahy, Water
25. Anne V. O'Connor, HREEO
26. Susan M. Dahl, Parks
27. Anne K.O. Gardner, Parks
28. Shana N. Conklin, CA
29. Winston Jack Ray, HREEO
30. Alexander A. Dumke, HREEO

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

1. David Reidell, Financial Services
2. Calvin Wheeler, Parks Forestry
3. Colleen Shields, School
4. Bradley McCullough, OT
5. Jennefer Hill, Librar
6. Jerome Falksen, PE
7. Anastacia DeCarrera, HREE
8. Kimberly Kershek, CA
9. Ruth Richardson, HREE
10. David Weisberg, DS
11. Katrina Taylor, Librarie
12. Armstead K. Smith, Park
13. Barbara J. Sippel, Librarie
14. Marjorie A. Abbas, Wate
15. James Brewer, Park
16. Marilyn MylesNewman, School
17. Adam M. Niblick, CA
18. Thomas D. Sitz, PE
19. Brian Tourtelotte, Park
20. Mary E. Calvo, Libraries (deceased)
21. Brian P. Joyce, Mayor's Office
22. Dominic J. Mitchell, CA
23. Leila S. Paye, HREEO

PEA Steward/Executive Committee Meeting Agenda
Reservations Required

Time & Place:

The meeting will be held Wednesday September 8, 2010, at Joseph's Grill, 140 South Wabasha in Saint Paul, (651-222-2435).

5:00 to 5:30 Social time
5:30 to 6:00 Steward meeting
6:00 to 6:30 Dinner

Agenda:

- 1) Treasurers Report Maia Sierra
- 2) Legal Counsel Mike Wilde
- 3) Vice President Karin Anderson
- 4) Personnel Page Delong
- 5) School District David Peterson

RSVP to Karin Anderson (651-266- 8765 or karin.anderson@ci.stpaul.mn.us) on or before
September 1, 2010

Dinner selections will be made from Joseph's menu. A dessert & nonalcoholic beverage may be included.

Thank you for your participation in PEA !

2010 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT	JOHN BLACKSTONE	WATER - 1900 Rice St., 55113	266-6324
	e-mail address:	john.f.blackstone@ci.stpaul.mn.us	
VICE PRES.	KARIN ANDERSON	CAO - 750 City Hall, 15 W. Kellogg, 55102	266-8765
	e-mail address:	karin.anderson@ci.stpaul.mn.us	
TREASURER	MAIA SIERRA	SCHOOLS - 360 Colborne St., 55102	767-8269
	e-mail address:	maia.sierra@spps.org	
SECRETARY	BRIAN KRAWIECKI	DSI - 375 Jackson St., Suite 200, 55101	266-9134
	e-mail address:	brian.krawiecki@ci.stpaul.mn.us	
NEGOTIATIONS			
CITY	PAUL HOGREFE	OTC-210 City Hall, 15 W Kellogg, 55102	266-6783
	e-mail address:	paul.hogrefe@ci.stpaul.mn.us	
SCHOOL	DAVID PETERSON	SCHOOLS - 360 Colborne, 55102	696-9626
	e-mail address:	david.peterson@spps.org	
PERSONNEL	PAGE DELONG	RAMSEY PUBLIC HEALTH	266-132
	e-mail address:	page.delong@co.ramsey.mn.us	

2010 STEWARDS

CAO/OFS/HREEO/
MAYOR'S OFF/

COUNCIL RES/HR REGINA ETOLL 500 City Hall, 15 W. Kellogg, 55102 266-8726
e-mail address: regina.etoll@ci.stpaul.mn.us
FIRE PAULA PETERSON 100 E. 11th St., 55101 228-6203
e-mail address: paula.peterson@ci.stpaul.mn.us

LIBRARIES

Full-Time
(Central /MMC) SUSAN HENRY MMC, 2109 Wilson Ave., 55119 501-6310
Sun Ray, 2105 Wilson Ave, 55119 501-6300
e-mail address: susan.henry@ci.stpaul.mn.us
(Branches) KATHLEEN CONGER Sun Ray, 2105 Wilson St., 55119 501-6300
e-mail address: kathleen.conger@ci.stpaul.mn.us
Part-Time CHARLENE McKENZIE Rondo, 461 Dale St., 55103 266-7419
e-mail address: charlene.mckenzie@ci.stpaul.mn.us
DSI FRANK BERG 375 Jackson St., Suite 220, 55101 266-9072
e-mail address: frank.berg@ci.stpaul.mn.us
OTC GALE HAWKINSON 600 CH Annex, 25 W. 4th St., 55102 266-6781
e-mail address: gale.hawkinson@ci.stpaul.mn.us
PARKS & REC VACANT: Temporary contact: Page DeLong 266-1321
e-mail address: page.delong@co.ramsey.mn.us
P.E.D. CRAIG O'BRIEN 1300 CH Annex, 25 W. 4th St., 55102 266-6695
e-mail address: craig.obrien@ci.stpaul.mn.us
POLICE MARSHA PANOS 367 Grove St., 55101 266-5781
e-mail address: marsha.panos@ci.stpaul.mn.us
PUB. HEALTH SUE BUTLER 555 Cedar St., 55101 266-1321
e-mail address: sue.butler@co.ramsey.mn.us
PUB. WORKS BILL VOS 900 CH Annex, 25 W. 4th St., 55102 266-6113
e-mail address: bill.vos@ci.stpaul.mn.us
SCHOOL DIST. JENNIFER CARPENTER Dist. Service Facility, 1930 Como Ave., 55108 603-5001
e-mail address: jennifer.carpenter@spps.org
SCHOOL DIST. LYLA GRIFFIN Purch. & Contract Serv., 360 Colborne, 55102 767-8288
e-mail address: lyla.griffin@spps.org
SCHOOL DIST. MARIAN HEINRICHS Res., Eval., & Ass., 360 Colborne, 55102 767-8116
e-mail address: marian.heinrichs@spps.org
WATER ISSAC AFWERKE WATER - 1900 Rice St., 55113 266-6267
e-mail address: issac.afwerke@ci.stpaul.mn.us

STAFF & OTHERS

BUSINESS AGENT / LEGAL COUNSEL: MIKE WILDE, Esq. 612-227-8425
E-mail addresses (use both, please):
MLWilde@Local49
mwilde8860@comcast.net

NEWSLETTER: SUSAN HENRY 651-501-6310 or 651-501-6300

WEBPAGE (<http://www.peaonline.org>): JOHN LARSON 651-266-7044
E-mail address: john.larson@ci.stpaul.mn.us

OFFICE ADDRESS: P.E.A.
360 NORTH ROBERT ST., SUITE 300, ST. PAUL, MN 55101