



The Corner

by Mike Wilde, Legal Counsel

Should We “Dial it In” or “Phone it In?”

There is no cloud of delusion swirling above my head that leads me to believe that anybody remembers my most recent newsletter article. I always write as though I’m pontificating into a great abyss. However, I found it convenient that my last article focused on membership status, monthly dues, and the unanimous decision by our members to protect our union by participation through membership.

That is not the only protection required. Organizations perform better and thrive when there is actual participation. You’ve likely never heard of organizations celebrating their success by having lower turnout. Schools thrive when more students are actively engaged in extracurricular activities. Religious organizations build a stronger sense of community when people attend services, engage in unfettered dialogue with newcomers and share ideas and experiences in spontaneous conversation. These are usually the forms of interpersonal communication that allow us to “dial it in” for optimal results.

PEA has long served a nice dinner to members who attend one of the two annual general membership meetings. The meals are not necessarily a lure to coax more people to show up, but it certainly doesn’t hurt. This format also significantly expands the opportunity to meet new members and put faces to names. Support for new ideas, like changing our bereavement leave, take on a tad more of a personal tone when you feel someone’s story behind their comment.

There have also been several memorable moments at those gathering, which many would expect to be uneventful union meetings. There was heated division one year when membership explored the idea of pursuing strict dollar amount increases to hourly

wages instead of the standard percentage increase. Much discussion ensued due to dramatically different results for different members. When President Steve Roy retired after years of selfless sharing, when John Blackstone struggled with cancer or when PEA hired a musician to play as members were signing into a holiday meeting... that was masquerading as a party – these were all borne of human interaction. These pale however when compared to the buzz of people chatting with others, whether in the same departments or even different employers.

These thoughts are on my mind because COVID and the resulting enhanced technology now allows us to consider technological options. Video attendance might allow those few people who want to attend, but can’t because of other conflicts, to at least learn what has transpired at the meeting. I don’t know how many of these conflicts are out there. It is likely a very small fraction considering we had one of our largest turnouts ever in April. However, the options now exist and virtual attendance might be an option for anyone who so chooses.

As PEA’s legal counsel, I don’t have a vote on matters before the membership or Executive Board. However, PEA has always allowed me a voice without a vote, especially when it might serve the client interest, which is what I’m doing here.

Organizational attendance is lacking in so many areas of life. Union participation has been a critical challenge for labor organizations for decades. Commitments often fall short of absolute because life happens.

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Mission Statement

The Professional Employees Association is dedicated to bargain, administer, and enforce labor agreements in a responsible, prudent, and lawful manner for the overall improvement of members’ working conditions, with emphasis on general advocacy, education, and communication.

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I get it. However, three considerations are worth noting here when we explore “virtual” options of convenience, but the considerations carry different degrees of peril.

The modest concern is that meeting attendance is expected of stewards and required in our constitution for prospective officers. A candidate for an officer role must have attended at least one general membership meeting in the past 12 months. Would virtual attendance satisfy this requirement? What about three years of six consecutive virtual attendances? Would the general membership be served well by never meeting, or even seeing, a potential candidate to run their organization?

Also, many people have shared the experience of having zoom meetings, or other virtual gatherings, where it is obvious that people are less engaged. We can do the laundry, walk the dog, or watch tv during any virtual meeting. Our attention, despite claims to the contrary, cannot be divided, but only quickly diverted. Einstein did not create the theory of relativity while multitasking in the Swiss patent office. And

although PEA won’t give birth to quantum physics, your undivided attention for a couple hours a year seems to be a fair commitment.

Lastly, whether due to conflict or convenience, a hybrid format for general membership meetings will very likely have a negative impact on meeting attendance, which is in reality human interaction and participation. Two years of virtual meetings were temporary substitutes that most people were grateful for, but they didn’t enhance participation. The meetings were clunky, disjointed and lacked spontaneity, but served us well while in the grips of the pandemic.

I encourage others to write an article for the next newsletter that sheds new light on this issue. Perhaps there are unknown facts, numbers or serious considerations that PEA’s membership needs to hear. But as the legal counsel who is approaching his third decade representing this great lil’ bargaining unit, and on a personal level, I’m pulling for your active, human, continuous participation... rather than phoning it in.

PEA Calendar of Events 2022

add these dates to your calendar!

Wednesday, July 13 **Board & Stewards Meeting, Joseph’s**
(stewards, special committee members, & executive board only)

Wednesday, October 12 **General Membership Meeting, Mancini’s**

Meet Your New Steward

Warsame Shirwa – Somali language and culture expert

Warsame Shirwa was born in Mogadishu, Somalia and came to the United States as a political refugee fleeing the civil war of Somalia. He lived in San Diego, California prior to moving to Minneapolis, Minnesota. Warsame has a BA in Political Science from the Somali National University and has a three-year degree in Computer Science and Education from Kenya Polytechnic, Mombasa, Kenya. With an extensive study in literacy he has worked with The Center for Third World Organizing (CTWO) in Chicago, Illinois. He has also trained with Allies for Justice at Augsburg College and has a certificate for organizing and mobilizing communities, a six-month training course with Organizing Apprentice Project, Minnesota Chapter.

A passion for education has led him to teaching in schools, libraries, as well as instructing in law enforcement academies for over twenty years in the United States. He continues to be an advocate for teaching and emphasizing how education is a necessary tool for success.

Warsame has multilingual skills speaking in five languages and reading as well as writing in four languages including Somali, English, Kiswahili, Amharic, and basic Arabic. Warsame is married with three children and is currently a full-time employee with the St. Paul Police Department as a Community Engagement Specialist.

Stewards & Executive Committee Meeting & Dinner

Wednesday, July 13, 2022

Location: Joseph's Grill
140 South Wabasha • 651-222-2435

Meeting: 5:30-7:00 PM

Dinner: 6:00-6:30 PM

Reservations required: RSVP to Joe at joe.musolf@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Please plan to arrive before 5:30PM so we can order promptly and start eating around 6:00PM. Dinner selections will be made from Joseph's menu; your dinner may include a non-alcoholic beverage of your choice. The meeting will be suspended when dinner is served so we can all enjoy our meal together.

AGENDA:

1. Greetings & Introductions
2. Reports
 - a. Legal Counsel
 - b. President and/or Vice President
 - c. Treasurer
 - d. Personnel
 - e. City Negotiations
 - f. District Negotiations
3. Adjournment of Combined Meeting

The Executive Committee will hold a short meeting of the board following the adjournment of the Combined Meeting.



Professional Employees Association

CITY OF SAINT PAUL & INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 625

www.peaonline.org

Executive Committee

President	Regina Eto <i>regina.etoll@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i> <i>PEAmyunion@gmail.com</i>	CAO – 500 City Hall, 15 Kellogg Blvd. W., 55102	651-266-8726
Vice President	Joe Musolf <i>joe.musolf@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	PED – 1400 City Hall Annex, 25 W. 4th St., 55102	651-266-6594
Treasurer	Beth Ulrich <i>beth.ulrich@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	PED – 1400 City Hall Annex, 25 W. 4th St., 55102	651-266-6689
Secretary	Sara Nurmela <i>peanewsletter@gmail.com</i>	HREEO – 280 City Hall, 15 Kellogg Blvd. W., 55102	651-266-8974
Personnel	Julie Kraus <i>julie.kraus@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	CAO – 400 City Hall, 15 Kellogg Blvd. W., 55102	651-266-8776
School Negotiations	Vaughn Kelly <i>vaughn.kelly@spps.org</i> <i>peanegotiations.spps@gmail.com</i>	1930 Como Ave., 55108	651-744-1682
City Negotiations	Patty Lammers <i>patricia.lammers@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	367 Grove St., 55101	651-266-5455

Staff & Others

Legal Counsel	Mike Wilde, Esq. <i>mike.wilde24@gmail.com</i>	545 7th St. W Saint Paul, MN 55102	612-227-8425
Member Outreach & Education Coordinator	Michelle Bergman Aho <i>michelle.bergman-aho@spps.org</i>	1930 Como Ave., 55108	651-744-2226
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LMCHI (City)	Karin Anderson <i>karin.anderson@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	CAO – 700 City Hall, 15 Kellogg Blvd. W., 55102	651-266-8765
LMCHC (SPPS)	Dave Crawford <i>david.crawford@spps.org</i>	1930 Como Ave., 55108	612-364-1914
Newsletter	Sara Nurmela <i>peanewsletter@gmail.com</i>	HREEO – 280 City Hall, 15 Kellogg Blvd. W., 55102	651-266-8974
Webpage www.peaonline.org	John Larson <i>john.larson@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	Libraries (SPPL) – 90 W 4th St., 55102	651-266-7044
Mailing Address	Professional Employees Association	PO Box 7333 Saint Paul, MN 55107-0333	

Stewards

Police, Fire, Emergency Management Public Health	Warsame Shirwa <i>warsame.shirwa@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	367 Grove St., 55101	651-266-8593
CAO, OFS, DSI	Jean Filipkowski <i>jean.filipkowski@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	CAO – 500 City Hall, 15 Kellogg Blvd. W., 55102	651-266-6262
Libraries	Peter Borgen <i>peter.borgen@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i> <i>PeterBorgenUnionSteward@gmail.com</i>	Highland Park Library, 1974 Ford Parkway, 55116	651-695-3700
Libraries	Kathleen Conger <i>kathleen.conger@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	George Latimer Central Library 90 W 4th Street, 55102	651-266-7000
Libraries	Therese Scherbel <i>therese.scherbel@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	George Latimer Central Library 90 W 4th Street, 55102	651-266-7048
OTC / HREEO	Derek Engelking <i>derek.engelking@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	1200 City Hall Annex, 25 W. 4th St., 55102	651-266-6748
Parks & Recreation	Mary Henke-Haney <i>mary.henke-haney@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	1100 North Hamline Ave., 55108	651-248-6500
Parks & Recreation – Zoo & Conservatory	Anne Ahiers <i>anne.ahiers@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	1225 Estabrook Dr., 55103	651-487-8274
PED	Sarah Zorn <i>sarah.zorn@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	1100 City Hall Annex 25 W. 4th St., 55102	651-266-6570
Public Works	Bill Vos <i>bill.vos@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	900 City Hall Annex, 25 W. 4th St., 55102	651-266-6113
School District	Kelsey Curran <i>kelsey.curran@spps.org</i>	360 Colborne St., 55102	651-767-8115
School District	Brianna Nyquist <i>brianna.nyquist@spps.org</i>	1930 Como Ave., 55108	651-744-1807
School District	Jerry Skelly <i>jerry.skelly@spps.org</i>	360 Colborne St., 55102	763-422-9624
Water	Sarah Brown <i>sarah.brown@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	1900 Rice St., 55113	651-266-1635