



## The Corner

by Mike Wilde, Legal Counsel

Change in the working world of Americans often fully develops over years or even decades. It is usually arrived at as the new normal only through persistent advocacy. For example, in PEA's April-June newsletter I gave a brief description of the arc of time Americans followed to create the standard 40-hour workweek. It took nearly 100 years!

With the changes that COVID-19 brought to the world, telework or remote work exploded as the response that allowed citizens to keep commerce, government and even recreation possible. Because it was so successful in seemingly unforeseen ways, it has since expanded sharply. After pandemic safeguards were lifted, I was convinced that remote work would be our generations equivalent of the 40-hour workweek. Another new normal. But it hasn't been an easy change.

PEA persisted in our prior school contract negotiations to get remote work into our labor contract as a term and condition of employment that established clarity and parameters. Our members demanded it and everything was done to advocate in that direction. Nevertheless, school leadership refused to agree to binding contract language. Yet the persistent fighting, arguing and lobbying did assist in moving the needle because the school district soon issued a policy that mirrored much of what we proposed in negotiations. Many of our members began to settle into and thrive in their remote work schedule.

The city had a similar path and, in fact, was quicker in issuing remote work policies that benefited those PEA members who could avail themselves to working successfully from home. Unfortunately, city leaders have now begun to roll back that practice and are exercising their managerial rights under the Public Employment Labor Relations Act (PELRA) to return workers to the office on a more frequent basis. Unhappy members are rightfully asking, what can be done? Other than becoming part of a large "brain drain," where valuable and skilled professionals leave City employment for private industries or other municipalities where remote work is fully allowed, the safest path is collective action through your union.

There is no guarantee as to a favorable outcome, nor is there any reason to expect swift results. But an individual approach by a single employee in filing complaints and challenging the lack of wisdom on the remote work rollback does have possible risks. Minnesota's PELRA law addresses the employee's "expression of views" as follows: *[PELRA] does not affect the right of any public employee or the employee's representative to express or communicate a view, grievance, complaint, or opinion on any matter related to the conditions or compensation of public employment or their betterment, so long as this is not designed to and does not interfere with the full faithful and proper performance of the duties of employment or circumvent the rights of the exclusive representative.* M.S.A. § 179A.06, subd. 1.

Although this seems to allow the expression of views of a public employee, it doesn't necessarily mean that is without limits. In fact, there are many cases across the United States where public employees have been disciplined for voicing opposition to a government policy. It is certainly not the normal or expected result that an individual would be terminated for speaking out against its government leader, but there is risk. One Supreme Court case from 2006 noted the importance of the employer's control over what an employee says on the job and the problems with allowing employees "to constitutionalize" every employee grievance.

This newsletter article is not intended to be a thorough analysis on the constitutional rights of a public employee. Instead, it is meant to educate our members and seek the optimal path to address the very serious challenge that a removal of remote work has on our members, city operations, and the vitality of its professional workforce. Speak with your fellow PEA members, talk to the stewards, attend general membership meetings, and let's explore the optimal way to address this and other changes in the workplace that impact us.

## 2025 Executive Committee

As elected at the October general membership meeting:

- President – Sara Nurmela
- Vice President – Sarah Brown
- Treasurer – Kelsey Curran
- Secretary – Joe Musolf
- Personnel Chair – Mary Henke-Haney
- City Negotiations Chair – Patty Lammers
- School District Negotiations Chair – Mike Dosedel

These changes will be reflected in the contact info in the last pages of the Q1 2025 newsletter.

### 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.

## PEA Calendar of Events 2025

**Wednesday, January 15** ..... Board & Stewards Meeting, Obb's Sports Bar & Grill  
(stewards, special committee members, & executive board only)

**We'll send out additional info on the meetings below when we have it!**

**April, date TBD** ..... General Membership Meeting, TBD

**July, date TBD** ..... Board & Stewards Meeting, location TBD  
(stewards, special committee members, & executive board only)

**October, date TBD** ..... General Membership Meeting, Mancini's

## Stewards, Staff, & Executive Committee Meeting & Dinner

**Wednesday, January 15, 2025**

**Location:** Obb's Sports Bar & Grill  
1347 Burns Ave.

**Meeting:** 5:30-7:00 PM

Please mark your calendar and save the date. Additional info about menu and how to RSVP will be emailed later.

# City Negotiations Update

by Patty Lammers, City Negotiations Chair

City Negotiations has been busy ensuring we are maximizing our contract by sending information to and assisting members in getting started with the process for performance pay, which applies to 43% of our members. We provided several handouts for members and have been answering questions. We recently completed a survey of eligible members and the feedback received is helping guide us on our next steps, which will include adding more information to our webpage and hosting more support sessions.

We also have the Safety LMC up and running in collaboration with AFSCME Clerical and Technical. Our first meetings are focusing on safety in libraries and parks and rec spaces. Please contact me if you have any concerns you want me to bring forward or if you would like to serve on the committee. PEA still has one safety committee position open.

What do we have to look forward to in 2025?

- Deferred match increase to \$900/year. This a 50% increase over the course of the contract.
- 2.5% cost of living increase effective January 1, 2025
- 2.5% increase to longevity pay effective January 1, 2025
- Performance pay members can start receiving their 1-3% increases

Patty Lammers  
City Negotiations Chair  
[patricia.lammers@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:patricia.lammers@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

## Looking for new stewards for the City!

Current stewards in the Office of Financial Services/Empowerment, Parks, and PED are stepping down and we need folks to take on the role. Many thanks to Alex Klarich, Adam Strehlow, and Sarah Zorn for all their work during their tenure.

Stewards help members understand and navigate workplace rights, communicate with members and leadership, and attend quarterly meetings – including our April and October General Membership Meetings. Stewards don't pay dues, and get support from the rest of the PEA leadership team.

To be eligible to be a steward, you must have been a member for the previous year, and attended at least one of our last two General Membership meetings.

If none of the eligible folks in those departments are interested, we'll open the positions up to anyone in the City, so even if you're not in OFS, Parks, or PED, think about it! If not for this round, maybe the next one!

If you have any questions about being a steward, reach out to [Mary.Henke-Haney@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Mary.Henke-Haney@ci.stpaul.mn.us)



# Professional Employees Association

CITY OF SAINT PAUL & INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 625

[www.peaonline.org](http://www.peaonline.org)

## Executive Committee

<b>President</b>	<b>Beth Ulrich</b> <i>beth.ulrich@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	PED – 1100 City Hall Annex, 25 W. 4th St., 55102	651-266-6689
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<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Brianna Herrera</b> <i>brianna.herrera@spps.org</i>	1930 Como Ave., 55108	651-744-1807
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<b>City Negotiations</b>	<b>Patty Lammers</b> <i>patricia.lammers@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	367 Grove St., 55101	651-266-5455

## Staff & Others

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<b>LMCHC (SPPS)</b>	vacant		
<b>Newsletter</b>	<b>Sara Nurmela</b> <i>peanewsletter@gmail.com</i>	HREEO – 280 City Hall, 15 Kellogg Blvd. W., 55102	651-266-8974
<b>Webpage</b> <i>www.peaonline.org</i>	<b>Claire Huber</b> <i>claire.huber@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	Libraries (SPPL) – 90 W 4th St., 55102	651-266-7475
<b>Mailing Address</b>	<b>Professional Employees Association</b>	PO Box 7333 Saint Paul, MN 55107-0333	

## Stewards

<b>Police, Fire, Emergency Management, Public Health</b>	<b>Derek Peterson</b> <i>derek.l.peterson@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	367 Grove St., 55101	651-266-5725
<b>CAO, DSI</b>	<b>Jean Filipkowski</b> <i>jean.filipkowski@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i>	CAO – 500 City Hall, 15 Kellogg Blvd. W., 55102	651-266-6262
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<b>Libraries</b>	<b>Peter Borgen</b> <i>peter.borgen@ci.stpaul.mn.us</i> <i>PeterBorgenUnionSteward@gmail.com</i>		651-695-3700
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