



Professional Employees Association, Inc.

PROFESSIONAL VIEW

PEA'S NEWSLETTER FOR APRIL-JUNE, 2007

www.peaonline.org

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Submitted by David Peterson, President

The Executive Committee has continued its schedule of monthly Tuesday night meetings at the union office. The agenda is dominated by committee reports, city or school district negotiation related topics, and the Business Agent/Legal Council Report on current grievances and other issues.

Some of the other current activities and discussion:

Discussed a potential bylaw change for bargaining agreement voting procedures,

Reviewed information from the City and the School District LMC Health Insurance meetings,

Discussed job description changes and responded to the City Human Resources Department,

Arranged for the 2006 audit of the financial records,

Set schedule for 2007 newsletter dates,

Reviewed progress on arranging the union office (because of the recent office move);

Reviewed clerical service for mail delivery and answering machine messages,

Discussed an annual Labor Relations Office union survey.

Discussed Business Agent/Legal Counsel contracted services,

Confirmed new steward notifications to the City,

Set the Summer General Membership meeting agenda, and

Worked on the beginning of arranging the 2008 calendar of events.

Again, thanks to PEA members for your support.

P.S. A special thanks to John Larson for the excellent work updating the PEA website (www.peaonline.org)

PEA Calendar of Events

2007

June 6th General Membership Meeting
Joseph's Grill – 5:30 PM

Sept. 11th Combined Steward-Executive
Committee Meeting
Joseph's Grill – 5:30 PM

December 5th General Membership Meeting
(with elections)
Mancini's – 5:30 PM

2008

March 4th Combined Steward-Executive
Committee Meeting
Joseph's Grill – 5:00 PM

Ongoing

The Executive Committee generally meets the first Tuesday of the month at the union office at 5:30.

PEA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES, DECEMBER 6, 2006

Submitted by Brian Krawiecki, Secretary

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Peterson, President; Kay Wittgenstein, Vice President; Rhonda Gillquist, Treasurer; Karin Anderson, Personnel Chair; Sheila Winderlich, City Negotiations Chair; Jaber Alsiddiqui, ISD Negotiations Chair; Mike Wilde, Business Agent/Legal Counsel Brian Krawiecki, Secretary, almost all PEA Stewards and more than 50 regular members.

Executive Committee Members and Stewards were introduced to the PEA members in attendance.

Minutes from the June 7, 2006 General Membership Meeting were presented.

MOTION by Mark Kaisersatt to adopt minutes from the June 7, 2006 General Membership Meeting. Second by Karin Anderson, MOTION CARRIED.

BUSINESS AGENT/LEGAL COUNSEL UPDATE:

Mike commented on the difference between Mayor Coleman's administration and the previous administration. He has found the current administration more open and easier to work with.

Mike explained the City's "20 day notice" for changes affecting the grade of a position. The Office of Human Resources sends the notice to PEA. Then PEA contacts the Steward of the affected position. If there are any concerns from the Steward or members about the change, PEA could send a letter of protest to the Office of Human Resources or PEA can waive the remainder of the 20-day notice to expedite the process.

Mike voiced his concern for "thin staff" in the Libraries and Parks and how staffing decisions could affect contract conditions.

Recent changes in employee evaluation process may require the employee to identify improvement goals. Mike believes this to be an arbitrary and vague tactic. Management has claimed there will be no disciplinary actions if improvement goals are not met. Mike offered to meet with any members who have issues or concerns with this tactic.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

PRESIDENT: Dave highlighted the recent PEA newsletter article from the November 15 edition of the Wall Street Journal:

"Class Struggle" by Virginia Senator-Elect, Jim Webb.

VICE PRESIDENT: The Labor Management Committee on Health Insurance will be sending out RFPs for Health Insurance Contracts.

PERSONNEL: PEA has 315 members, 248 with the City and 67 with the School District. Frank Berg introduced new LIEP employee Christine Barr.

TREASURER: The current PEA fund balance is \$122,758. The projected year-end balance is \$119,827. The 2007 proposed budget includes \$72,246 of income and \$70,595 in expenses. PEA financial reports are available to members for their review.

CITY NEGOTIATIONS: Sheila encouraged members to serve on the Negotiations Committee.

ISD NEGOTIATIONS: The ISD contract will be available on PEA's website soon. The current contract will run until the end of 2007.

2007 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELECTIONS:

Elected by white ballot to serve on the Executive Committee: David Peterson, President; Kay Wittgenstein, Vice President; Marie Schrul, Treasurer; Karin Anderson, Personnel; Rebekah Doyle, ISD Negotiations Chair; Bruce Riebe, City Negotiations Chair and Brian Krawiecki, Secretary.

2006 MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD: The 2006 PEA Member of the Year Award was presented to BRIAN TOURTELOTTE.

NEW BUSINESS: The City has offered to change the mileage reimbursement to the Federal rate. The current proposal from the City does not include a base or daily per diem. There was unanimous consensus from the membership to reject the City's offer as it does not include a base per diem.

Door prizes were awarded to: Therese Scherbel, Mary Ann Miller, Paula Peterson, Diane Olson, Susan Henry, Glenn Pagel, Peg Doheny and Paula Henry.

ADJOURNMENT: MOTION by Bruce Riebe to adjourn. Second by Sheila Winderlich, MOTION CARRIED.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm.

Professional Employees Association (PEA) General Membership Meeting Agenda

Time & Place:

PEA's general membership meeting will be held Wednesday, June 6, 2007, at Josephs Grill, 140 South Wabasha in Saint Paul.

First 22 attendees to arrive will receive a Door Prize.

Schedule:

5:30 Social Time

6:00 sharp – Dinner

6:30 Meeting

Agenda:

1. Introduction of stewards and executive committee members in attendance
2. Adoption of minutes from the December 6, 2006, General Membership meeting
3. Business Agent/Legal Counsel Update - Mike Wilde
4. Committee Reports
 - a. President
 - b. Vice President
 - c. Treasurer
 - d. Personnel
 - e. Negotiations (City)
 - f. Negotiations (School District)
5. Old Business
6. New Business
7. A chance to win 1 of 4 Rainbow gift certificates or 1 of 4 Target gift certificates
8. Adjourn

Reservations Requested:

RSVP to Kay Wittgenstein (651-266-1285) or kay.wittgenstein@co.ramsey.mn.us on or before June 1, 2007.

Please give your name, department, and dinner choice (chicken, steak, or fish). If you have special dietary needs please let Kay know when making your reservation.

Note:

Only regular members may vote and participate fully in the Association. If you are a “fair share” individual, please consider becoming a regular member today so you can become an active participant in your union.

LEGAL CORNER

by Mike Wilde

I'm going to ask you to endure a little bit of self-reflective history. If it is a huge bore, then I failed for this quarter's newsletter. Otherwise, I've educated you a bit on my perspective on what we have here ... in our Professional Employees' Association.

In 1995 I scoured the postings at my law school in search of potential clients looking for an employee advocate. Although I was a "wet-behind-the-ears" attorney, I was looking for opportunities to help people level the relationship between employer and employee. By then I had turned down at least one modest offer that would have more than paid my rent, if only I would agree to represent the employer. That opportunity wasn't a devil-pact, nor was I a crazed zealot, but there were already dozens of young lawyers willing to further tip the balance of power towards the employer. Since I had focused seven years of education in the other direction, on representing the employees, I wasn't going change.

I knew you could choke (or starve) on idealism, but my background included watching my father face obvious wage cuts while his employer (Hormel) openly admitted they were making record profits. I was not interested in ever working for someone who could compel me to do something to the workers that I didn't believe in. Luckily, in 1995 I got a phone call from Susan Henry of the Professional Employees Association, Inc. (PEA) and they were interested in meeting me to see if I could help them. Well ... Susan gave me a tidbit of info about PEA and I arrived at the meeting with a law degree, vim and vigor. I met a young woman named Laura Samargia, President of PEA, and one of her colleagues, Martha Kantorowitz, who served as Vice-President, and whom I later learned was the President just months before. I eventually learned that these two young women drew some skepticism from their professional colleagues because they wanted to "push the envelope." In prior years, PEA was alleged to be a fraternal organization that was created under the cover of the new Minnesota Public Sector Labor Law (PELRA) and it gave the hard-working engineers and architects reason to get together for a beer. One of the founders, Tony Ackerman, was no doubt a man of good intentions, but the people that interviewed me stressed that more representation was now needed ... and on a broader level.

These two women were not alone. They

also had people like Shar Knutson, who really demonstrates advocacy and equality to people that she represents. That is probably why she later became the St. Paul Trades & Labor Assembly President. And they had others on a Board that were willing to do more for the Professional Employees that they represented. Dave Peterson, Susan Henry and Wendy Neurer are names that I remember from that interview.

I was lucky – people who were motivated to serve others with no apparent gain to themselves interviewed me. It wasn't obvious at the time, but to this day I recognize that people like that don't come along too often. I seized the opportunity and I accepted the job, in part, because the leadership wanted to "do the right thing." I became PEA's new business agent. There was no job description, but I was ready to start making one.

More than 12 years have passed since that April interview. A lot of the same faces remain in the bargaining unit. The City has had 3 mayors and the District has had an equal number of administrators. But leadership and headlines have changed, and PEA has matured. Some would say that it has even grown stagnant. The contract is considered a "given" and the leadership seems to be one of those fortunate assignments that is taken up "by the other guy." This is not the case.

We've done a lot. PEA led the way into an equitable conversion between City and County health departments into a merged workforce under the Joint Powers Agreement. We duplicated the process for our PED employees in workforce development and nearly all of them received untold benefits from that conversion. We were integral in the fight against Norm Coleman's privatization. We weathered layoffs in the mid 1990's as well as 2004. We have had scores of grievances and mediations that vocalize the "other side of the story," which is otherwise drowned out by an employer's unchallengeable assertions. We've strived to give meaning to your contracts and remove doubt from the terms of your working lives.

PEA is not a panacea and anyone who thinks it should be is missing the point. It is YOUR union. Collective Bargaining is bonding together for a voice where otherwise you have none. It is standing up where otherwise you stand-alone. It is strongly proposing change where otherwise you sheepishly and politely suggest ideas.

PEA is a small example of what people can do when they pool resources and try to address issues that are bigger than any one of us individually. It is resourceful, but not omnipotent. It advocates, but does not scream. It fairly represents, but does not recklessly insulate those who are unproductive. It does what it was meant to do ... it speaks for a group of PROFESSIONAL employees who chose public sector work for their livelihood.

But the one thing you need to understand is that nothing is self-sufficient. Your volunteers won't always be there.

FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT-KAY WITTGENSTEIN

The City is preparing its employees to register on line at open enrollment time. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with Outsource One site and the Benefit Ready Program. We were mailed information on this system with instructions on how to access it. This way you can check your benefits whenever you wish. You start out by logging on to: www.BenefitReady.com.. Human resources

Working terms will change and your voice might be heard, or it might be eventually silenced. What are YOU doing? When was the last time you attended a meeting? Have you done anything to protect your contractual rights?

Your answers might be important to you, but your actions are important to us. Commit to one year on the negotiations team (Aug. 2007 – Aug. 2008). Run for an Officer position. Return the favor that Laura and Martha tried to extend years ago. Become a team member ... it will all be worth it.

will still have open enrollment sessions with vendors available to speak with before we register for benefits.

We have received proposals for medical coverage from five vendors. The comparison and decision of the plans is just starting. We hope to have a decision made by July.

Please get involved in PEA. The more we know the stronger we are!

HANDY HOUSEHOLD TIPS

Reheat Pizza: Heat up leftover pizza in a non-stick skillet on top of the stove. Set heat to med-low and heat 'til warm. This keeps the crust crispy. No soggy micro pizza. I saw this on the cooking channel and it really works.

Expanding Frosting: When you buy a container of cake frosting from the store, whip it with your mixer for a few minutes. You can double it in size. You get to frost more cake/cupcakes with the same amount. You also eat less sugar/calories per serving.

Reheating Refrigerated Bread: To warm biscuits, pancakes, or muffins that were refrigerated, place them in a microwave with a cup of water. The increased moisture will keep the food moist and help it reheat faster.

Newspaper to Keep Weeds Away: Start putting in your plants, work the nutrients in your soil. Wet newspapers put layers around the plants, overlapping as you go. Cover with mulch and forget about weeds. Weeds will get through some gardening plastic; they will not get through wet newspapers.

No More Mosquitoes: Place a dryer sheet in your pocket. It will keep the mosquitoes away.

Squirrel-Away: To keep squirrels from eating your plants, sprinkle your plants with cayenne pepper. The cayenne pepper doesn't hurt the plant & the squirrels won't come near it.

Reopening Envelope: If you seal an envelope and then realize you forgot to include something inside, just place your sealed envelope in the freezer for an hour or two. Voila! It unseals easily.

Reducing Static Cling: Pin a small safety pin to the seam of your slip and you will not have a clingy skirt or dress. Same thing works with slacks that cling when wearing panty hose. Place pin in seam of slacks and - voila! - static is gone.

Measuring Cups: Before you pour sticky substances into a measuring cup, fill it with hot water. Dump out the hot water, but don't dry the cup. Next, add your ingredient, such as peanut butter, and watch how easily it comes right out.

Hair Conditioner to Shave Legs: Use your hair conditioner to shave your legs. It's a lot cheaper than shaving cream and leaves your legs really smooth. It's also a great way to use up the conditioner you bought but didn't like when you tried it in your hair.

Get Rid of Ants: Put small piles of cornmeal where you see ants. They eat it, take it "home" & can't digest it so it kills them. It may take a week or so, especially if it rains, but it works & you don't have the worry about pets or small children being harmed!

2007 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT	DAVID PETERSON	SCHOOLS - 360 Colborne, 55102	696-9626
VICE PRES.	KAY WITTGENSTEIN	PHD - 555 Cedar St., 55101	266-1285
TREASURER	MARIE SCHRUL	SCHOOLS - 360 Colborne, 55102	767-8275
SECRETARY	BRIAN KRAWIECKI	LIEP - 8 E. 4 th St., #200, 55101	266-9134
NEGOTIATIONS			
CITY	BRUCE RIEBE	OT/IS/PW--700 CH Annex, 25 W. 4 th St., 55102	266-6091
SCHOOL	REBEKAH DOYLE	SCHOOLS - 360 Colborne, 55102	767-8366
PERSONNEL	KARIN ANDERSON	CAO - 750 City Hall, 15 W. Kellogg, 55102	266-8765

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			
CENTRAL	SUSAN HENRY	MMC, 2109 Wilson Ave., 55119	501-6305
PART TIME	SUSAN McMAHON	Highland Pk, 1974 Ford Pkwy., 55116	699-6756
BRANCHES			
LIEP & HR	FRANK BERG	8 E. 4 th St., #200, 55101	266-9072
PARKS & REC	BRIAN TOURTELOTTE	300 CH Annex, 25 W. 4 th St., 55102	266-6414
P.E.D.	CRAIG O'BRIEN	1100 CH Annex, 25 W. 4 th St., 55102	266-6695
POLICE	MARSHA PANOS	367 Grove St., 55101	292-3781
PUB. HEALTH	SUSAN MYRAN	555 Cedar St., 55101	266-1210
SCHOOL DIST.	LYLA GRIFFIN	360 Colborne, 55102	767-8288
	COLLEEN SHIELDS	360 Colborne, 55102	767-3472
TECH. & MAN.	PAUL HOGREFE	210 City Hall, 15 W. Kellogg, 55102	266-6783
PWO	BILL VOS	700 CH Annex, 25 W. 4 th St., 55102	266-6113
WATER	ISSAC AFWERKE	1900 N. Rice, 55113	266-6267

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