



PROFESSIONAL VIEW

PEA'S NEWSLETTER FOR JULY-SEPTEMBER, 2009

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FALL 2009 PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

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

Congratulations to Marian Heinrichs and Jennifer Carpenter who were elected Stewards for Saint Paul Public Schools. They were elected from a field of four on August 10. They will serve with Lyla Griffin as the number of School District stewards is increased to three. A very special thank you to Lisa Jones for her service as a steward and to Baheriy Alelmu and Kieu Oanh Nguyen who stood for election. This shows the strength of PEA and the willingness of our members to serve.

There are several issues of interest for the September 9 Executive Board and Stewards meeting. The Executive Committee identified Steward Training as a goal for 2009. Page Delong will speak about new members and Mike Wilde will address stewards' duties regarding contract issues. Karin Anderson represents PEA on the City Labor Management Health Care Committee. She will explain the VEBA and HRA which will be available in 2010 and City Health Care Enrollment for 2010. An update on School District issues will be presented by David Peterson for the School District.

I am very excited and pleased with the progress PEA has made on contract issues. The details are confidential. I can tell you that PEA continues to bring value to our members. PEA brought expertise and value to the City Labor Management Health Care Committee VEBA and HRA process. The VEBA and HRA are significantly improved because PEA stepped up to the plate.

One of my favorite publications is the Facility Engineering Journal. Every issue has an article that addresses a pertinent personnel issue. The July/August issue article titled, "Group Dynamics, Can Strengthen the Facilities Team" is a three page article on group development. As I read the article I considered how the PEA Executive Committee compared and concluded that the Executive Committee is strong because each member brings compassion, is not afraid to express their opinion, a decision is made after careful consideration, and then we speak with one voice. It is an honor to be part of this dynamic, enthusiastic process.

One of the primary goals of PEA is to bring value to members. The Executive Committee and Stewards are focused on this goal. We welcome your comments and concerns. I look forward to seeing the Board and the Stewards September 9 at Joseph's.

2009 Calendar of Events

- September 9** Combined Stewards Board meeting at Josephs Grill on Robert Street, 5:30 PM
- December 2** General Membership Meeting with elections at Mancini's 531 W., 7th St., 5:30 PM

Jennifer Carpenter: An Introduction

I would like to introduce myself as one of the new stewards on the school district side. As a steward for the district within PEA I will work with all of our members, learn from them and our board and try and become a liaison between us and relay information as fluidly as possible. I work at the District Service Facility in Operations and Maintenance (1930 Como Ave.) as the Recycling Manager. I help the district with all the recycling we do (food waste, paper, plastic, etc.) and waste management (trash, computers, light-bulbs, VHS tapes, etc.). I'm single and living in Roseville. In my free time I enjoy spending time with my three nieces (and their parents and grandparents :), watching movies, going on long walks, swimming, volunteering, and reading. Thank you for this great opportunity; I hope to serve you well!

Marian Heinrichs: An Introduction

I am a program evaluator in the department of Research, Evaluation and Assessment (REA) located on the 3rd floor of 360 Colborne. I have been actively involved in unions for most of my working life, starting back in 1974 when I was a registered nurse working in a hospital in Winnipeg, Canada. By 1976, I was the president of our local chapter. In those days, unions had a lot of power. Nurses across Manitoba had voted to strike and before that happened, we received a pay increase that more than doubled our salaries. For the first time, nurses began to be treated as professionals and women were able to live on their incomes as nurses. Today the economy is in a completely different situation. Our association has had layoffs and there are more to come. We face an uncertain future and this is the time when we all need to come together and get involved in the association. The power of the association is not in its leaders but in all of **US** as members. I look forward to serving you over the next few years.

PEA Steward/Executive Committee Meeting Agenda

Reservations Required

Time & Place:

The meeting will be held **Wednesday September 9, 2009**,
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
- 6:30 to 7:00 Steward meeting (continued if necessary)
- 7:00 to 8:00 Executive Committee Meeting

Agenda:

- 1) Steward Meeting – Steward Training New Members (Page Delong)
- 2) Steward Meeting – Steward Training Responding to Contract Issues (Mike Wilde)
- 3) Steward Meeting – VEBA*, HRA** and City Health Care Benefits (Karin Anderson)
- 4) Steward Meeting – School District Issues (David Peterson)

*VEBA (Voluntary Employees Beneficiary Association)

** HRA (Health Reimbursement Arrangement)

At the conclusion of the Steward meeting, the stewards are dismissed. However, stewards may stay for the Executive Committee meeting (This may involve discussion of confidential grievance situations that can not be communicated beyond the Executive Committee meeting).

- 6) Executive Committee Meeting (reports, old and new business)

Reservations Required:

RSVP to Karin Anderson (651-266- 8765 or karin.anderson@ci.stpaul.mn.us) on or before
September 4, 2009

Dinner selections will be made from Joseph's menu.

A desert and nonalcoholic beverage may be included.

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Thank you for your participation in PEA !

THE CORNER

By Mike Wilde, Legal Counsel

The national headlines and the work that your PEA staff has recently been devoted to are both part of the same crisis: Healthcare Costs. Nobody can ignore the rising healthcare costs. But most of the attention is directed at uninsured. The most frequent pitch is that a Country of this size and wealth cannot have uninsured citizens. It is also cited as a humanitarian effort to provide children and those more vulnerable with the healthcare that most of us come to expect when we have insurance. These are certainly worth efforts. However, further examination shows that the uninsured usually still find healthcare services, but only at a much greater cost. Remember former President Bush's comment ... "I mean, people have access to health care in America," as said during the summer of 2007. "After all, you just go to an emergency room." Yes – it's true. Our emergency rooms are not gated communities and urgent care does not usually post "Bouncers" at the door. Sick people usually get medical care.

And who pays those costs? The insured does. It is paid through the insured's increased premiums. This only makes sense. I recently heard a radio commentator remark that the general public will never allow passage of a broad public option because the number of uninsured is still less than the number of insured people. His logic was that the "haves" will greatly out pressure the "have nots" in order to avoid the higher taxes that it will cost to administer a public option. This analysis stops at the shallow end. I think a debate of this size needs to go a little deeper. Since the ill get treatment and the hospitals remain open for business, it is fair to say someone is already paying the cost of those who have no resources or insurance. The cost of operations is obviously passed on to the insurance companies who, in turn, negotiate rates with the healthcare providers (clinics, hospitals, doctors, etc.).

Is anyone willing to assume that the insurance companies eat these increased costs? No – they are passed on to the employers who provide health insurance to their employees. The employer's costs are either passed directly on to the employee or, if the employees have formed a union, the costs become the center piece of negotiations. That is what PEA has been doing with the City of St. Paul during the last five months. We have been negotiating the implementation of the Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) so we can keep costs down and get the most benefit for our contribution dollar.

In a prior newsletter article I discussed some of the details on the HRA and the VEBA Trust Agreement. But let's take a look at some of the factors that impact costs and remain well beyond either the City or the School District's control. Here are a few that are of interest:

- Drug makers (pharmaceutical companies) are now subsidizing individuals' co-pays with rebates. This means that expensive name brand drugs come with high dollar rebates that help the customer reduce their co-payments. But the effect is that the insurance companies and health plans miss out on the opportunity for buyers to find reasonable generic alternatives. This keeps the price high for everyone and defeats the purpose of co-pays.
- The prevalence of obesity rose 37% between 1998 and 2006 in the U.S.A.
- Obese people spent 42% more than people of normal weight on medical costs.
- New York City's health commissioner has proposed a penny-an-ounce tax on sugar sweetened beverages because they are believed to be the single largest driver of the obesity epidemic.
- Approximately \$700 billion a year is spent on tests, treatments and medical procedures that provide no value to the patient.
- More and more healthcare experts are studying the quality of healthcare, instead of the quantity of measures, in order to curb costs.

From the information available in our Labor-Management Committee on Health Insurance in the City, or in the District, to the national headlines, it seems that the healthcare debate will rage on as costs climb. We will keep you posted through the fall and again at the holiday party this December.

2009 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT	JOHN BLACKSTONE	WATER - 1900 Rice St., 55113	266-6324
VICE PRES.	KARIN ANDERSON	CAO - 750 City Hall, 15 W. Kellogg, 55102	266-8765
TREASURER	MAIA SIERRA	SCHOOLS - 360 Colborne St., 55102	767-8269
SECRETARY	BRIAN KRAWIECKI	DSI – 8 E. 4 th St., #200, 55101	266-9134
NEGOTIATIONS			
CITY	PAUL HOGREFE	OT/IS-210 City Hall, 15 W Kellogg, 55102	266-6783
SCHOOL	DAVID PETERSON	SCHOOLS - 360 Colborne, 55102	696-9629
PERSONNEL	PAGE DELONG	RAMSEY PUBLIC HEALTH	266-1321

STEWARDS

CAO/OFS/HREEO/ Mayor's Office / Council Research / Human Resources	REGINA ETOLL	500 City Hall, 15 W. Kellogg, 55102	266-8726
FIRE	PAULA PETERSON	100 E. 11 th St., 55101	228-6203
LIBRARIES			
FullTime:			
Central/MMC:	SUSAN HENRY	MMC, 2109 Wilson Ave., 55119	501-6310
Branches:	KATHLEEN CONGER	Rice Street, 1011 Rice St., 55117	558-2223
PartTime:	CHARLENE MCKENZIE	Rondo, 461 Dale St., 55103	266-7419
DSI	FRANK BERG	375 Jackson St., Suite 220, 55101	266-9072
OTC	GALE HAWKINSON	600 CH Annex, 25 W. 4 th St., 55102	266-6781
PARKS & REC	BRIAN TOURTELOTTE	400 CH Annex, 25 W. 4 th St., 55102	266-6414
P.E.D.	CRAIG O'BRIEN	1300 CH Annex, 25 W. 4 th St., 55102	266-6695
POLICE	MARSHA PANOS	367 Grove St., 55101	266-5781
PUB. HEALTH	SUE BUTLER	555 Cedar St., 55101	266-1321
PUB. WORKS	BILL VOS	900 CH Annex, 25 W. 4 th St., 55102	266-6113
SCHOOLS	JENNIFER CARPENTER	District Service Facility, 1930 Como Ave., 55108	603-5001
SCHOOLS	LYLA GRIFFIN	Purchasing & Contract Services, 360 Colborne, 55102	767-8288
SCHOOLS	MARIAN HEINRICHS	Res., Eval., & Assessment, 360 Colborne St., 55102	767-8116
WATER	SALAM HAMID	WATER - 1900 Rice St., 55113	266-1632

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