

SEIU Local 140 Newsletter 3.31.23

Upcoming Events

- Write to schoolboard@pps.net to tell the board to pay custodians disaster pay for the snow days! You can use this email [template](#) if you want.
- Have lunch with fellow union members
Saturday 4/1 from 12 - 2pm at Hawthorne Asylum Food Carts SE Madison and 11th.
- Upcoming bargaining dates (All are welcome to attend as long as you are off the clock. Let the front desk know you are there to observe SEIU bargaining and they will direct you to the meeting room.)
4/7 at PEC, 501 N Dixon St. from 1 - 5pm
4/21 at SEIU 503, 525 NE Oregon St. from 1 - 5pm
- Union meeting
Saturday 4/8 at 10am 525 NE Oregon St. or on zoom.
- Sign our [petition](#) to increase wages and staffing

Bargaining team update

The bargaining team met Thursday 3/23 to discuss building a strong bargaining campaign and to work on proposals to make improvements in our contract. We worked on proposals for getting paid bi-weekly and preventing transfers without worker consent. Our next bargaining session with management will be Friday 4/7 from 1-5 at 501 N Dixon St. As long as you are off the clock, you are invited to join for any part of the bargaining session as an observer. Let the front desk at PEC know you are there to observe SEIU bargaining and they will direct you to the appropriate meeting room.

Stop Cop City

For several years now, there have been plans by the Atlanta Police Foundation (APF) to construct an expansive \$90 million 85-acre [“Public Safety Training Center”](#) right inside Atlanta’s Weelaunee forest—a police compound that would include a dozen shooting ranges, a whole mock city block to practice crowd control, and a litany of other police facilities—giving the project the name ‘Cop City’, used by community members and activists. While a third of the budget is to be paid for by the city, the other \$60 million is to be entirely from private donations and companies such as Coca-Cola and Chick-fil-A, and the board of the APF is [“filled with executives from nearly all of Atlanta’s big-name companies like Delta, Waffle House, the Home Depot, \[...\] Wells Fargo and UPS, among others”](#).

In September 2021, Atlanta City Council approved the plan in a 10-4 vote after 17 hours of public comment in which 70% dissented against the proposal. The plethora of private interests aligned with this project in contrast to community dissent demonstrates how this can also be understood as an attack on working people; as Kamau Franklin of Community Member Builders

[explained](#), “What we have here is a city dedicated to protecting the police while pushing out poor, working-class residents—particularly Black, poor, working-class residents—under the guise it’s helping to protect people”. Cop City would also be part of international training with Israeli police under a program called GILEE, intensifying the way in which police act as an occupying force in communities of color, by sharing tactics with the Israeli police who enforce the occupation of Palestine. It is also a highly environmental issue: the forest has been described as “The Lungs of Atlanta” and that “the South River Forest is one of the largest unspoiled forested areas left in the Atlanta metro area” by the [Nature Conservatory of Georgia](#).

Since the plan was approved, there have been activist groups occupying the prospective land in resistance to the construction of Cop City. On January 18th 2023, Georgia State Patrol officers in a raid killed one of these activists in the forest, Maneul Esteban Paez Terán a.k.a. Tortuguita, who suffered at least 14 gunshot wounds coming from several of the officers' firearms. Earlier this March, an [independent autopsy](#) by the family concluded Tortuguita was sitting cross-legged and was shot dead with their hands up and in front of their body. The original police statement had been that Tortuguita shot first and that the killing was in “self-defense”, however the government’s autopsy has not been released, there is no body cam footage to back this up, and the City of Atlanta has released footage where an officer suggests there was friendly fire—a common occurrence among police. Furthermore, the friends and family of Tortuguita have said that they would not have carried a gun, and Tortuguita herself [saying previously](#) “We get a lot of support from people who live here, and that’s important because we win through nonviolence. We’re not going to beat them at violence.”

In addition to the killing of one leader, emails were revealed this February between the APF and their construction contractor that they are awaiting [“indictment to the leaders”](#) of Stop Cop City, in order to start construction in April; consequently just a few weeks ago, 23 people were arrested, charged with domestic terrorism, and all but one were denied bond, all for being at a peaceful music festival protesting Cop City. The reasonings of the prosecutor were as flimsy as trespassing, sleeping in hammocks, and wearing black or muddy clothes. This [charge](#) is a felony and carries 35 years in prison.

The movement to stop Cop City might sound distant or disconnected from the type of struggles we face as workers at PPS, and indeed they are different. That said, it shows shared interests and transparent collaboration between the police, corporations, and the state—which is not specific to Atlanta. We must also understand that the targeted killing and repression of those who stand up or speak out necessarily becomes a threat to asserting our own demands as working people.

Starbucks strike

Last Wednesday, unionized workers at Starbucks stores around the country walked off the job in [protest](#) of the company’s repeated violations of labor law. The corporation has violated federal labor law by firing workers in retaliation for union organizing and for refusing to bargain in good faith with workers at unionized stores. At least 9 stores have unionized in the Portland area,

though none have been able to negotiate a contract yet. The wave of organizing in Starbucks stores throughout the country has been led by the workers largely separate from established unions, although an affiliate of SEIU called Workers United has been helping to [back](#) their organizing efforts.

Under threat of subpoena, former Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz was [questioned](#) at a [Senate hearing](#) on Wednesday where he denied multiple rulings by the National Labor Relations Board of union busting. He faced questions about why the company has not yet bargained a single contract with any of the almost 300 stores which have voted to form a union and he refused to promise to exchange meaningful proposals with the union within 2 weeks. At one point in the hearing, he claimed that it was “unfair” to call him a billionaire. Workers also testified at the hearing to share their experiences of retaliation and other labor violations in response to their organizing efforts.