**SEIU Local 140 Newsletter 6.16.23**

**UNION UPDATES**

**Bargaining Updates**

The bargaining team presented our remaining proposals to the district on Monday. We were supported by 9 custodians who sat with us in solidarity as we met with Frank Leavitt, Whitney Ellersick, Roshni Sabedra, and the district’s attorney Chris Duckworth. Tim Carman and Chanh Nguyen also joined on management’s side.

Our remaining proposals included:

* Vacation days as well as Christmas and Independence day holidays for nutrition service workers
* 30% raises for all custodians bringing the entry level wage to $25/hr

Management met in private for nearly 2 hours before returning to respond to our proposals. They rejected nearly every proposal with the exception of a few relating to minor issues with the contract language. The following are some of our proposals which management rejected or failed to offer a counterproposal on:

* twice a month pay
* removing the district’s right to subcontract out work
* inclement weather pay
* reducing nutrition service probationary period to 3 months
* removal of discipline from personnel file after 2 years
* simplified grievance procedure
* option for employees to evaluate management
* safe and healthy staffing requirements
* vacation days for nutrition service
* monthly evaluation of probationary employees
* temperature requirements between 60-90 degrees
* doing away with Servsafe as the required food handler’s certification

In terms of wages, management proposed 3% raises for custodians, 2.5% for NS assistants, and 5.5% for NS leads. That is only a 43 cent raise for entry-level NS assistants and a 57 cent raise for entry-level custodians. This is in contrast to our proposal to make starting wages $25/hr for both NS assistants and custodians and to raise custodial wages by 30% and NS wages by 45% across the board.

It is clear that the district is out of touch with the realities of inflation and cost of living in Portland. On multiple occasions the district’s attorney simply stated “we would prefer to stick with current language,” showing that the district only wants to maintain the status quo. We know that our working conditions are becoming increasingly unbearable and our wages are unlivable. If this district is unwilling to consider our initial proposals, it is up to us to increase the pressure to show the district that we will not back down.

As negotiations continue, it will be crucial for all of us to do what we can to put public pressure on the district to do the right thing. This includes showing up in person to a bargaining session, attending board meetings, joining rallies, and potentially, if we have not agreed on a new contract by this November, being ready to go on strike if necessary.

**What is Bargaining and How Does it Work?**

The bargaining process can be confusing and legalistic, so we hope to clarify a few important aspects here. Every few years we bargain over a new contract which is the agreement between us (the workers) and management which establishes our wages, benefits, and other rights related to our jobs. Our current contract will expire on June 30th whether we have reached a new agreement or not.

If we have not reached an agreement with the district by June 30, we will not see any raises on July 1st, however the current contract will stay relevant until we settle on a new contract. Our power does not come from the bargaining team members, but from all of us together showing our collective power. A strike is our most effective tool, and showing that we are unified and willing to fight for each other forces the district to worry about the risks of a potential strike. Technically, we are not allowed to strike until 150 days after the start of bargaining followed by a mediation period. This would mean we could not strike until November/December. Hopefully we will not need to strike, however, it is important to understand the possibility and what that would mean.

If after months of bargaining and public pressure on the school board including signing petitions, and attending board meetings and rallies we have not reached an agreement, all members would have the opportunity to vote to authorize a strike. We would need a very high percentage of members to vote in favor of a strike for a strike to be effective. If we do not have strong unity, we will be weak and it will be easy for the district to divide us and bring in replacements if only some of us go on strike.

An effective strike would mean the vast majority of workers do not come to work. This would mean schools would not be cleaned, meals would not be prepared, and our schools would not be able to function. Because of the impacts, we would need to make sure the public understands our reasons for striking and are willing to support us. We would also need to make sure we can support each other with things like childcare, food, rent, etc. since we would not be paid while we are on strike.

With enough solidarity, organization, and dedication, a strike will force the district to agree to our demands so that they can keep our schools running. A potential strike is still many months away, but it is important to know all of our tools for winning a fair contract. We can also look to the teachers for inspiration since they are several months ahead of us in bargaining and could possibly go on strike in October. We encourage everyone to get involved in the bargaining process in any way they can. Management has shown that they have little interest in even negotiating by giving no counterproposal to almost all our demands. Ultimately, the gains we could get from bargaining are solely dependent on whether we are willing to fight for them. If you have any questions about the bargaining process, please contact any of the members of the bargaining team!

**Board Meeting**

Chris [Walters](https://www.youtube.com/live/B95avxV9e1k?feature=share&t=5059) spoke at this week’s board meeting to update the board on our wage proposals and bargaining progress. A nurse and [medical student](https://www.youtube.com/live/B95avxV9e1k?feature=share&t=3184) addressed the issue of lead, asbestos, and high heat which the district has failed to address. A member of PFSP [spoke](https://www.youtube.com/live/B95avxV9e1k?feature=share&t=3401) out about the unlivable wages of EAs, paras, and other support staff at PPS. PAT president Angela Bonilla [spoke out](https://www.youtube.com/live/B95avxV9e1k?feature=share&t=4079) against the district’s [claim](https://www.koin.com/news/education/our-students-cant-wait-pps-teachers-organize-district-wide-walkout/) that the union was involved in a “misinformation campaign.” She also announced that the union was seeking mediation from the state as a result of the lack of progress in bargaining between PAT and the district. Andrew Scott [responded](https://www.youtube.com/live/B95avxV9e1k?feature=share&t=4694) in typical condescending fashion saying “it’s frustrating because…you really feel like you are being lied to, and that is not a good place where we can collaborate.”

Later in the meeting, teacher and PAT member Beyoung Yu [spoke](https://www.youtube.com/live/B95avxV9e1k?feature=share&t=9558) against the proposed budget which fails to address the many issues in our schools including large class sizes, asbestos and lead in buildings, overheated classrooms, and outdated curriculum while continuing to hire highly paid administrators. The board voted to adopt the budget which was approved 5-2 with Gary Hollands, Herman Greene, and Byronie McMahon voting no.

**Membership Meeting Recap**

We gathered for a membership meeting this last Saturday at Llewellyn Elementary at noon. The start time was changed after the executive team sent out a survey and most in attendance agreed that this was a better time. We started off by having small group discussions about why we were there and what issues we were facing in our workplaces. We discussed our bargaining proposals as well as the proposals of the district. There was a segment of the meeting about the Weingarten Rights, or the ability of those in a union to have a steward present when being called in by management. We heard about a proposal to have the union make a resolution to free [Mumia Abu-Jamal](https://www.internationalist.org/portland-painters-call-freedom-for-mumia-2211.html), a long time political prisoner, and finished with Arianna from the SEIU 503 communications team getting testimony from members about their concerns.

**LOCAL SOLIDARITY**

**Magic Tavern Dancers on Strike to Unionize**

Strippers at Magic Tavern, a club in NW Portland, have independently organized and [gone on strike](https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.koin.com/news/portland/portland-strip-bar-dancers-to-rally-against-dangerous-working-conditions/amp/) after repeatedly ignored [demands for safety](https://www.change.org/p/support-dancers-rights-at-magic-tavern) from the owner of the club, Benjamin Donohue. Several dancers have been fired in retaliation for speaking out for themselves or other workers. Basic measures such as security staff or cameras have been denied and strippers are expected to either fend for themselves or be silent and accept sexual harassment, abuse, groping, and stalking as "part of the job". While this same attitude is all too typical towards working class and marginalized women who face sexual violence—and especially towards sex workers—the specific position of strippers has made unionization a way of defending themselves from this violence and expressing their power as sex workers. Furthermore, it serves to fight the racism of the club in which decorations such as a confederate flag are hung, and to introduce anti-discrimination language into their contract to better protect black, brown, and queer workers from targeted retaliation and abuse. Dancers at Magic Tavern are pursuing unionization under Actors' Equity, a union that represents workers in entertainment. This is the same union that has represented strippers at Star Garden, a club in Hollywood CA that [achieved unionization](https://www.thenation.com/article/society/strippers-union-vote-nlrb/) this May after a 15-month long campaign that started in 2022. Star Garden was the first strip club to be unionized in the US in 25 years, making Magic Tavern potentially the second.

Dancers at Magic Tavern held a rally for stipper pride this Sunday for community members and labor activists to support their strike to unionize. Several strippers from Star Garden came up to Portland to support their sisters' struggle in solidarity, accompanied by local union members from the Painters Union, Starbucks Workers United, SEIU Local 140, and more. A march was held around the building to disallow entry and gain publicity, while the owner Benjamin Donohue mostly hid inside or peeked out the front door with nothing to say to his workers: quite reminiscent of PPS management's response during rallies at PEC.

The rally closed out with strippers recounting their experiences and struggles for a safe and respectful workplace which dignifies sex work as work, and how they saw their organizing as part of a broader movement to decriminalize and destigmatize sex work. The rally was held as a celebration of pride as well, because of the inextribcability of sex work with sexual and gender marginalization, and that their strike action as sex workers brings pride back to it's roots as a militant struggle for freedom, as opposed to the increasingly corporate version of pride that does not help marginalized people.

You can give the Magic Tavern dancers much needed support [here](https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-magic-tavern-dancers)

**Providence Nurses Strike**

Nurses with the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) at Providence plan to go [on strike](https://www.opb.org/article/2023/06/14/providence-nurse-strike-health-care-workers-portland-meidcal-center-seaside-hospital/) starting Monday after negotiations have failed to reach agreements around staffing, sick leave, and pay. As nurses prepare to strike, Providence is hiring out-of-state temporary staff in order to try to undermine the power of the strike. You can support by donating to the strike fund [here](https://www.opb.org/article/2023/06/14/providence-nurse-strike-health-care-workers-portland-meidcal-center-seaside-hospital/) or signing up for a picket shift [here](https://fs22.formsite.com/nAjztM/n0d5dw8guc/index?link_id=1&can_id=a27c252a2c4430e75f9a55433cbf1d3b&source=email-heres-how-you-can-support-the-strike-at-providence&email_referrer=email_1958816&email_subject=heres-how-you-can-support-the-strike-at-providence).

**International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) Local 600 Negotiations**

KGW editors and photojournalists are in negotiations for a fair contract with fair wages. So far, their employer Tegna Broadcast Media has only offered 1% raises despite making $630 million in profits last year. You can support them by signing their [petition](https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/protect-kgw-local-journalism-jobs/?fbclid=IwAR06iQXlFIeW9jcy2n4n1cLs3Fimj5hG0R7BA00S8mPpy_IUbNwmnqr6jSs) to protect local journalism jobs.

**INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY**

**Ship Visit**

I (Julie Bade) recently had the great experience of volunteering with a wonderful group called the [Pacific Coast Coalition for Seafarers](https://www.instagram.com/pccseafarers/). A few of my fellow union members and I had the privilege of meeting and touring one of the many cargo ships that frequent our city. This one in particular had come from South Korea with a load of cement. We met with several crew members and the captain. We brought bags full of hygiene items, snacks, and COVID test kits. We had a chance to sit and talk at length with one of the crew members. It was really interesting hearing about his work and life.

Seafarers sign a nine month contract and work 10 hrs a day 6 days a week. Many are not allowed off the vessels where they port. Most of the crew were from the Philippines. This individual was hoping at some point to become the cook and eventually save enough money to open his own restaurant. He sends most of his money home to support his mother. Most of the crew are supporting families back home. There are few good jobs in the Philippines and so many are forced to work outside of their country in harsh conditions. It was an incredible experience and I am looking forward to continuing the visits. It would be great if other people would like to participate. Please get in touch with Gabe if you are interested. You can also contribute to this [gofundme](https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-seafarers-access-shore-leave-in-portland?utm_campaign=p_lico+share-sheet&utm_medium=copy_link&utm_source=customer) page that is raising money to purchase a van to transport seafarers on shore leave in Portland and provide them with critical services onboard vessels. It's really interesting learning about other people's culture and life experience. Very gratifying. Hope to see some of you "on board"!

**Anti-APEC Workshop**

On Saturday, workers and activists from a variety of backgrounds gathered for a teach-in and discussion about organizing efforts against the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), an intergovernmental forum that seeks to uphold corporate interests around the world. This year, the US is hosting APEC with upcoming meetings in Seattle, and San Francisco. These talks are held [behind closed doors](https://www.citizen.org/news/ipef-secrecy-agreements-undermine-biden-administrations-claims-of-a-new-trade-model/) for corporate and governmental leaders to promote corporate profiteering at the expense of workers around the world. APEC, and associated free trade deals like the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) will only lead to lower wages, fewer labor and environmental regulations, and increasing threats of war due to increasing global economic competition.

At the workshop we learned about the effects of previous free trade deals like the North American Free Trade Agreement ([NAFTA](https://www.citizen.org/wp-content/uploads/Manu-OR-2-Pager-2019.pdf)) which led to the loss of over a million manufacturing jobs and gave corporations the right to sue entire governments such as when [Cargill sued Mexico](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cargill-mexico-idUSBRE91K1GB20130221) for imposing tariffs on drinks containing high fructose corn syrup. While APEC is promising investments in renewable energy and digital training to promote women’s participation in tech, free trade only results in further attacks on workers, the environment, consumer privacy and more. Free trade deals like IPEF do not even need the approval of congress, yet they allow corporations to make billions in profits while at the expense of people and the planet.

Although these deals may seem distant from our jobs at PPS, they will have negative impacts here and we have a duty to stand up to demand that the voices of the people are prioritized over profit. Wherever APEC has gone, the people have [stood up](https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/un-human-rights-chief-team-chile-violent-protests-1.5335176) to voice their opposition, and the meetings in Seattle are an opportunity to push back on the agenda of international corporations. If you are interested in joining the [People’s Summit](https://www.pnw-pop.com/peoples-summit) to oppose APEC in Seattle this coming July 29-30, you can fill out this [registration form](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfgEZofCe9WvpLVYVCgqqsF4SAfxWkXYa7yhj64htnSi82m1g/viewform).