

SEIU Local 140 Newsletter 7.23.23

Take Action!

- Sign our [bargaining platform petition](#)
- [Support Malak](#) as she continues to fight for justice for all victims of sexual harassment at PPS
- Support SEIU 49 workers at Kaiser at any of their [informational pickets](#) July 24, 26, and 28th!
- Attend bargaining during any of the following scheduled bargaining sessions:
 - Friday 7/28 from 9-5 at the union office (525 NE Oregon St.)
 - Friday 8/4 from 9-5 location TBD
- Rally and board meeting Tuesday 8/8 at 5:15pm at the PEC/district building (501 N Dixon St.)
- The Secretary-Treasurer position on the executive team will be opening soon for nominations
- Membership meeting Saturday 8/12 at noon. Location TBD

Union Updates

Custodial Labor Management Committee (LMC) Updates

On Tuesday, Jim D'Arcy, Dave Vecsi, and Gabe Penk met with Roshni Sabedra, Frank Leavitt, Tim Carman, and Stetson James from management to discuss issues related to last week's custodial training fair as well as the district's failure to respond to an incident involving a jar of human feces that was found in a custodial break room and had been smeared on walls and furniture. Although this incident occurred over a month ago and was reported to HR we had not heard if the district was pursuing an investigation. Roshni told us they were and that the district would be reaching out soon to conduct interviews.

We also shared concerns that participants at the custodial training fair had raised regarding two "motivational" videos which management showed. One video entitled [Lion Mentality](#) explained that "a true hunters goal is not the prize, a true hunters goal is to hunt...when you are a true hunter, you hunt until you get a gazelle and you don't stop until you get one, and then you get another, and you get another, and you get another." Besides being unrelated to our job as custodians, we are concerned about the aggressive, hyper-masculine, and predatory theme, especially in the wake of widespread sexual harassment coming to light. Frank Leavitt responded to our concern by stating that "the intent was not to make people uncomfortable." He also explained that "we all go through the world with our own experiences" and there are lots of people in the department who are veterans and athletes.

Finally, we also asked when an independent audit into the district's compliance with state and federal law concerning workplace harassment will begin and when the district will implement a thorough and meaningful in-person training regarding sexual harassment prevention. On both items Roshni said that she did not have the power to make those decisions and that she would try to find answers. She said she couldn't commit to having a response before September but she claimed that "we have always wanted employees to feel safe and comfortable."

Workplace Surveillance

In a recent investigatory meeting, custodial manager Tim Carman revealed that he has been placing cameras in certain break rooms to monitor workers. There are several ongoing investigations that the union is aware of which uses evidence from cameras to accuse custodians of “time theft” and “abuse of break time” among other things. Tim Carman explained that when he was the union co-chair in 2011 he agreed to allow the practice of installing cameras to monitor workers. He claims that they are only used after a review from HR and that it is security services who do the installation. Neither Tim nor Roshni would comment on how many are currently installed but Tim claimed he does not know of any that are currently installed.

The union will be filing an information request to learn more about the extent of this practice. It is concerning that management would spend so much time and resources to spy on their workers rather than checking up on us in person and offering the support and guidance we might need face to face. It seems like management is all too eager to discipline employees on relatively minor concerns while failing to address widespread and systemic issues of sexual harassment.

Meeting with Genevieve Regarding Sexual Harassment at PPS

Members of the SEIU bargaining team and executive team met virtually with the Senior Director of Employee and Labor Relations Genevieve Rough Friday morning to address the concerns that PPS is failing to protect its workers from widespread sexual harassment. SEIU members shared more details from workers who have come forward to report their experiences enduring sexual harassment working at PPS. We also posed questions to Genevieve regarding district policy and made 4 clear demands of the district. Our demands are as follows:

1. Ensure the district follows its own [sexual harassment policy](#) and protects workers.
2. Schedule a follow up sexual harassment meeting with all PPS unions before the end of August so we can get a district-wide understanding of the problems.
3. Provide thorough and meaningful in-person sexual harassment prevention trainings as soon as possible.
4. Conduct an independent, district wide audit and share the following information with all PPS unions.

Last Thursday Genevieve sent an email in response to a letter to the board and board testimony which alleged that the district was failing to follow its own policy on preventing sexual harassment. The email stated, “Spreading misinformation and messages that the district doesn’t care, doesn’t do anything, and fires people for reporting complaints causes real harm. Those lies discourage staff who experience harassment at work from reporting, isolating them from resources and from the help we can provide.” However, during the meeting she did acknowledge that the district “has a lot of work to do.” Genevieve admitted that she is “not steeped in the details of every case” but she explained that her role is ensuring that the district response to these complaints is “consistent and thorough.”

We asked when the district would put an employee on administrative leave. She explained that it is on a case by case basis depending on (1) safety concerns, (2) whether there could be interference in an investigation, (3) if it could be terminable, and (4) if it is a repeated occurrence. She also shared that “the FOMs are feeling really impacted” by issues we have brought to light and that “they care deeply about the staff.” In regards to our demands, Genevieve agreed to invite all the unions to a meeting in order to share how widespread the issue is across the district. She also shared that the district has hired a woman to investigate the allegations we are bringing forward. She promised to share the name of the investigator with us and claimed that she was independent and from outside of the district.

We will follow up with more details as we learn of them. In the meantime we encourage you to talk to a union representative or steward you trust if you have experienced sexual harassment at PPS.

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Documenting Conditions in Schools During Heat Waves

With more high temperatures forecast this week and much of summer still ahead of us, it is helpful to familiarize oneself with the [OSHA](#) rules around working in hot conditions. All schools should have received between one and three portable thermometers depending on their size. These can be used to monitor conditions in schools and should be able to show the highest recorded temperature within the last 24 hour period. We aren't the only workers affected by the conditions in schools, with PAT filing a group grievance about classroom temperatures at the beginning of this school year. If interested you can document temperatures in a variety of rooms at your site throughout the day.

Local Solidarity and News

How to Support Teamsters

There are many ways to support striking workers. If Teamsters UPS workers end up walking out there will be many picket lines at UPS facilities here in Portland and around the country. A strike involves walking a picket line to discourage replacement workers (scabs) to enter a site and could also include talking with coworkers or friends about what is going on and how they can get involved. This [pledge](#) is

one way to stand in solidarity, and lists potential activities such as bringing food and supplies to picket lines, attending picket lines, and contributing to the strike fund. Stay tuned for more information about this possible strike and ways to support workers!

International Solidarity and News

People Oppose the Asia-Pacific Economic Framework (APEC)!

SEIU 503 recently voted to contribute \$2500 to the PNW [People Over Profit](#) coalition which is organizing against the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings in Seattle starting July 29th. APEC is made up of 21 “member economies” from around the Asia-Pacific including the United States, and was formed in 1989 to promote free trade policies that increase the profits of the 1% by worsening labor, environmental, and human rights conditions for billions of people around the region. This year, trade ministers and corporate representatives are attempting to write a new free trade deal for a huge part of the Asia-Pacific region called IPEF or the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. These meetings in Seattle are held behind closed doors and the agreement will not even require congress’ approval to be signed.

Organizations representing workers, women, migrants, human rights and environmental advocates, and community groups will be meeting in Seattle July 29th and 30th for a [People’s Summit](#) and rally to oppose this proposed new trade deal. Saturday will offer workshops and presentations including from Eni Lestari, a domestic worker from Hong Kong and an organizer with the International Migrants Alliance. Sunday will feature a rally and march to demonstrate our unity against the false solutions which APEC proposes to address poverty, gender discrimination, and climate change. We need real solutions that prioritize people, not profit! You can still register to attend [here](#)! Several members of SEIU 503 will be attending. We hope to see you there!

Screen Actor’s Guild Strike

SAG-AFTRA, the union that represents actors in Hollywood, has been on strike for a week now after members authorized a strike vote with 98% approval early in July. The demands of the union have centered around the residual system, AI generated likenesses of actors, the expectation to self-tape auditions, and in general liveable wages. Despite many faces of SAG-AFTRA in the media being famous actors, the majority of membership (they represent 160,000 workers) are actually ‘journeymen actors’ with 86% percent of workers not even making enough to meet the eligibility threshold for union health benefits (\$26,000 annual pay), according to union president Fran Drescher. Part of this comes from the shift to streaming services, which has dramatically reduced the much relied on pay from residuals—a payment a worker would receive when a show that they were in was aired at any time down the line—because the business model companies have shifted to is now subscription-based.

SAG-AFTRA has had strong solidarity with the writers guild (WGA) and their strike too, which has been going on for months now. The writers and actors face some similar struggles particularly with AI being used in an attempt to ‘automate’ writers’ jobs, along with the increasing gig model of the industry

that worsens precarity and turnover for workers. With these two unions now on strike, the majority of productions in Hollywood have stalled with the companies bound to lose major profits until they accept a deal with the unions, demonstrating the decisive power that strikes can have with solidarity. Additionally, some SAG-AFTRA members have been showing up to support the LA hotel workers' strikes, which were covered in the previous newsletter.