

SEIU Local 140 Newsletter 5.18.23

Take Action!

- **The next bargaining session** is Friday 5/19 from 1-5pm at the SEIU Office, 525 NE Oregon St.
- **Rally at the school board meeting before the budget vote** Tuesday 5/23, rally at 5:15pm, meeting starts at 6pm at the PEC 501 N Dixon St.
- **PPS worker meetup** at Peninsula Park on Saturday 5/27 from 1-4pm. Food will be provided.
- **Offer feedback on our union meetings** by filling out this [quick survey](#).
- **Sign the [petition](#)** for more funding for essential positions in the PPS budget.

UNION UPDATES

Heat Rules

After 2021's deadly heat dome, the Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) implemented [new rules](#) to protect workers in high heat conditions. Although the protections are limited, they do apply to conditions in our workplaces when the heat index (how hot it feels based on a calculation of temperature and humidity) rises above 80°F. For those of us who work in non-air conditioned buildings, it is likely that the heat index was in the 80s if not the 90s in our buildings for a lot of this week.

According to [Oregon OSHA's rules](#), PPS must:

- measure the heat and humidity levels in our buildings to determine the heat index
- provide access to cool drinking water when the heat index indoors is over 80°F
- provide a schedule of increased paid breaks when the heat index indoors is over 90°F
- implement increased communication between managers, supervisors, and workers

It is likely that PPS is not following these basic rules. Many schools do not even have the appropriate tools to measure temperature and humidity accurately. If you have more questions or you believe PPS is violating these rules, you can contact Gabe Penk or file an OSHA complaint [online](#).

PPS Budget

The Community Budget Review Committee (CBRC) shared their findings with the School Board on [May 9th](#). They reviewed the PPS [proposed 2023-24 budget](#) by comparing the budget to the Board's stated [Board goals](#) and made recommendations based on their findings. The CBRC found that FTE (full-time equivalent positions) for non-direct service administrators (excludes principals and other school-based administrators) is proposed to increase 16% while FTE for licensed staff (teachers, counselors, licensed support personnel) will decrease 8%. Additionally, the report finds that from 2020 to the proposed budget, FTE for non-direct service administrators has increased 52%!

The report also summarizes the deferred maintenance at PPS. It finds that deferred maintenance (i.e. necessary maintenance work that the district has postponed or delayed) was greater than \$400 million last year alone. Therefore, the cumulative total for deferred maintenance is over \$1 billion. This should be no surprise for those of us working in non-earthquake safe buildings with damaged asbestos tiles, ceiling leaks, and no AC.

Rally at the School Board Meeting

On Tuesday the 23rd there will be a rally starting at 5:15pm before a school board meeting at 6pm at the PEC district headquarters. This is the last meeting before the board will be voting on the proposed 2023-24 budget. Amy Silvia from our union will be speaking, and there will be speakers from the PAT. We are asking anyone who is able to come out, wear purple and pack the meeting to demand that the board allocate more money for district workers! This is a great chance to show solidarity and connect with members of other unions within the district. As our unions build connections, events like this are essential to show the district that we will support one another.

LOCAL SOLIDARITY

Zenith Energy

Much as PPS has done little to protect worker safety during this recent heat wave, corporations like Zenith prioritize profit over the health and safety of workers, the wider community and our planet. The Zenith Energy facility in NW Portland sits in an industrial area with the Willamette River on one side and Forest Park on the other. Many other fuel storage sites line the river to the north and south. Saturated with ports, various factories, and trainyards, the lower reaches of the Willamette River and the shore of the Columbia along N and NE Portland comprise a major industrial zone. In 2016, the City passed an ordinance banning new fossil fuel export facilities. However, Zenith acquired their property in 2017 from an asphalt company and used a “grandfathered in” permit to get around the ban. Zenith then began significantly increasing the amount of trains carrying oil into the facility.

As detailed in the Portland Mercury [article](#) linked in the newsletter last week, the Bureau of Development Services (BDS) is the city government body responsible for giving Zenith their Land Use Compatibility Statement (LUCS) that is essentially a permit allowing the company to operate. The BDS was under the control of Commissioner Dan Ryan when they denied Zenith a permit in 2021 citing the city’s climate commitments. In the fall of 2022, Ryan and the BDS changed their mind amidst a legal battle with the company, [granting](#) the LUCS with some conditions including that Zenith Energy would move towards only exporting renewable biofuels through the facility. This winter, Commissioner Ryan was moved to other assignments while Commissioner Carmen Rubio was placed in charge of the BDS by Mayor Wheeler. Despite the change in leadership, the message from the city remained that same: that Zenith’s operations didn’t conflict with the city’s aims as far as sustainability.

A recent [article](#) in the Oregonian shows that despite their claims of scaling back their operations, Zenith has instead been increasing the amount of crude oil and diesel that they are exporting through the city.

Beyond the effects on climate, many have become concerned about the risk of train derailments and oil spills, especially after the devastating derailment in East Palestine Ohio earlier this year. Zenith has hired the corporate law firm Stoel Rives as they fight for their right to poison our air, land and water. Workers in the fossil fuel and chemical industries also face numerous threats to their health. The train cars release a significant amount of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), substances that pose a number of threats to human health. As we organize to move away from an economy based on extraction towards one based on care, mutual aid and true sustainability, it’s critical that workers in

polluting industries are given ways to put their skills to work in other ways. The fight for environmental justice is a fight for worker's rights!

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

SEIU Staffers in DC Vote to Strike

It may seem strange that paid staff working for a union would need to have their own union, but unfortunately even unions themselves can and do engage in union-busting. This is currently on display at the SEIU headquarters in Washington DC where staff workers have voted to reject management's contract proposal and have [authorized a strike](#). They are accusing SEIU president Mary Kay Henry of union-busting and refusing to negotiate in good faith. You can learn more about their organizing efforts on their [tiktok](#) and [instagram](#) pages.

The fact that SEIU is contracting out union jobs and refusing to pay livable wages to its own employees is distressing, but it is a good reminder that just being part of a union does not always guarantee that our rights will be protected. As workers, our power comes from our shared goals and our ability to take collective action and fight for what we need. We know our working conditions the best, and it is up to all of us to stand up and defend our rights. Let's continue to fight for a better future for all workers and ensure that our unions follow our lead!