

SEIU Local 140 Newsletter 12.15.23

Take Action!

- Sign our [strike pledge!](#)
- Join our exec team meeting Jan 6 at 1pm, SEIU (525 NE Oregon St.)
- Next bargaining session Jan 12, 1-5pm, PEC (501 N Dixon St.)
- Membership meeting Jan 13 at 12pm, location TBD.

Union Updates

Holiday Party

SEIU and PFSP members and others gathered for a holiday party this past Sunday where we had a meal together, listened to speakers, talked about organizing and how to build solidarity between our unions as well as having a raffle. As we move forward in our contract campaigns, we're up against the same district and school board that the teachers faced during their strike. It's crucial that we continue to build connections with our fellow workers at PFSP during the next few months and beyond as rank and file power grows in both unions.

Bargaining Updates

The PPS bargaining team wasted over an hour of our time listening to a presentation on the district's budget as well as details about the nutrition service department including USDA regulations. When we finally asked to see the district's latest offer on wages, they admitted that they are able to use money from the general fund to pay nutrition service workers.

PPS's latest proposal is a 5% wage increase for NS assistants and 7% for leads as well as applying a step system based on years worked in a particular classification. While this will benefit those who have worked for the district longer, it still amounts to less than a dollar raise for entry-level NS workers whose wage will only increase to \$18.12/hr. The district is also offering 5% for custodians in the first year. The district is not offering retro-pay and have not responded to our proposals on healthcare, inclement weather, safety, and building assignments. They are also trying to add a half hour unpaid lunch to the head custodian schedule.

While we remain disappointed at how slowly bargaining continues to move, we have been successful at continuing to move the district from their initial proposal. They have also offered another bargaining date before mediation is set to begin January 18th. We will meet next January 12 from 1-5 at the district building.

Board Meeting Report Back

Tuesday's board meeting was full of powerful testimony, despite attempts of the board to silence workers and the public. After the board showered Guadalupe Guerrero in praise, audience members booed and shouted "good riddance" to the unpopular superintendent who announced he will be resigning in February. Board members responded to boos by telling the audience "there are children listening."

During public comment, Donelda Weiss, a former PPS contractor [testified](#) about her experience of sexual harassment, discrimination, and retaliation at the hands of the district. She explained how she was put on paid administrative leave for 2 months after reporting harassment before being dismissed without ever being given a reason. She explained that the district retaliated by attempting to delay her son's graduation and taking over 2 months to enroll him in a new school.

Once again, the board placed union comment at the end of the agenda which was scheduled at 9pm. However, union representatives were not able to speak until nearly 10pm. [Veronica](#) shared how disappointing it is that the district claimed to not have enough money to offer time and a half pay for NS workers being asked to work during their winter break despite offering time and a half for substitute teachers. Charlotte from PFSP shared more examples of the routine sexual harassment that takes place at PPS without being addressed.

After leaders from PAT and PFSP had also shared their frustration at the disrespect they have felt from the district, Board member Andrew Scott responded by saying "I wish we didn't have to pay substitutes time and a half in order to come back and I wish some of our PAT members were also focusing on our students." When Angela Bonilla tried to respond he adjourned the meeting and cut her mic. When audience members expressed their anger at his behavior, he smirked and gloated to them after the PPS live feed had been cut, admitting "I live rent free in your head and it brings me joy every day."

Local Solidarity

Central City Task Force Announces Recommendations

The task force convened by Governor Tina Kotek and co-chaired by herself and CEO of The Standard insurance company Dan McMillan recently [announced](#) its recommendations to "save" downtown Portland with some questioning whether their strategy will be beneficial to all. Meetings were not open to the public and the group contained no representatives of the working class whatsoever, consisting of a mixture of local politicians, nonprofit leaders and business figures. The plan calls for the criminalization of public drug use, echoing critics of Measure 110 who claim that it has increased crime and worsened our state's overdose crisis, with advocates defending the measure for delivering services instead of incarceration to those struggling with addiction. A proposed emergency declaration would see the city, county and state governments coordinate their efforts to address addiction and mental health issues. Other priorities include increased services for homeless folks including daytime services and shelters. The proposal calls for continuing the partnership between Oregon State Police and the Portland Police

Bureau which began this fall, where State Police officers help patrol downtown, and for more rangers at parks in the city center. On top of this, it recommends a three-year moratorium on new business taxes.

Workers at Portland Japanese Garden Raise Concerns

Workers at the Portland Japanese Garden recently raised [concerns](#) about what is going on within the organization including dismissive comments made by CEO Steve Bloom regarding his use of certain language, and even retaliation against workers who spoke up in advocating for an anti-racist workplace. While many customer service workers at the garden are paid \$16-18 per hour, the cost for a ticket to enter the Garden is currently \$21.95. Bloom reportedly had a base salary of \$377,019 in 2022 and on top of that was given an additional “merit bonus” of \$88,028. Alongside this outrageous pay, there is also a large budget for travel expenses to various events around the world. Workers at the Garden describe a general disconnect between management and those on the ground, and despite enjoying many aspects of their jobs are concerned about the direction that the organization is heading. Stay tuned for more updates about this ongoing struggle.

International Solidarity

Justice for Jude Labor Delegation

On Tuesday members of our union, PFSP, as well as individuals representing Jobs with Justice and Extinction Rebellion PDX attempted to deliver a letter to the office of Senator Merkley. The letter, which SEIU 140 as well as dozens of other labor and human rights organizations had signed on to, calls for justice for Jude Fernandez and the passage of the Philippines Human Rights Act which would cease the flow of military funding to the Philippines until the human rights situation improves. Jude was a lifelong trade unionist and member of labor federation KMU (Kilusang Mayo Uno), who was targeted and brutally murdered by the Philippine National police, aided and supported by US tax dollars.

We gathered at the large office building on Portland’s waterfront near the Salmon Street Springs fountain that houses Senator Merkley’s office, PGE and the Portland Metro Chamber (the business association formerly known as the Portland Business Alliance). We had prior confirmed an appointment with Merkley's staff, and a different member of his staff eventually came, but refused to let us into the lobby. We delivered the letter and began sharing our message for the Senator. While describing the dire conditions facing workers in the Philippines, private security threatened to call the police unless we left the premises. We refused to be silenced and continued to hold our program outside where we decried the lack of access to our represented officials and expressed our unwavering solidarity with the courageous workers of the Philippine labor movement. It is unacceptable that our tax dollars fund the murder of labor organizers in the Philippines and we continue to demand the Senator Merkley introduce the Philippine Human Rights Act in the Senate!