

# ...PPS custodians will start returning to work

(From Page 1)

ingless.

PPS attorneys asked the Court to rethink its decision. Instead, in April, the Court reiterated it: firing the custodians violated the law. Trouble is, the Court didn't say what the district had to do next.

Cathy Minberg, PPS chief operating officer, told the Labor Press the district expects to recall the custodians starting in July. The current PHC contract expires at the end of June, and won't be renewed. The district will hire an extra manager to oversee the transition. As to wages and benefits, that's not clear; the budget approved by the school board in April did not include money above what was going to PHC.

Minberg said when the custodians return, the district will work to bargain a new contract with the union. As for back pay, Minberg maintains the district doesn't owe any—a position she says PPS attorneys have validated.

To attorney Mark Griffin of Griffin and McCandlish, that stance is preposterous. Griffin is representing the fired custodians in a federal lawsuit that was

put on hold awaiting the outcome of the Civil Service Board lawsuit. Because it's now been established that PPS fired its custodians illegally, Griffin said, the district must make the custodians "whole." That means: offer them reinstatement, pay four years of back pay (minus any wages they've earned in that time), make four years of pension contributions, and reimburse them for any medical costs that would have been covered under their health insurance.

"The school district is going have to follow the law eventually," Griffin said.

On May 20, the fired custodians met once again at the Portland office of SEIU Local 503, and were given forms to fill out to get their claim started. A steering committee elected in December is trying to locate all the custodians, and determine how many are willing to go back to work for PPS.

"There's a whole lot of trust issues right now," said custodian Grant Walter, former president of now-merged SEIU Local 140. "I used to be a very loyal district person. And even I don't trust them."



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