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LABOR  
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PortlandLabor  
Recognition  
Night

Thirty-two people received awards June 3 at the ninth annual Labor Appreciation and Recognition Night dinner sponsored by the Northwest Oregon Labor Council.

In addition to paying tribute to these "friends of labor," the event was a fundraiser for the Emergency Fund of Labor's Community Service Agency. This year, \$2,000 was raised on raffle tickets for thousands of dollars worth of prizes donated by local unions and area businesses. Last year, the Emergency Fund assisted 851 people from 29 different unions who were facing emergency situations. Money from the fund can be used to help pay for rent, utility bills, transportation, prescription drugs and more.

United Way of the Columbia-Willamette made a special presentation to Glenn Shuck, executive director of Labor's Community Service Agency, for his work with United Way during its annual fundraising drive.

Recognized at this year's dinner (pictured above) were: Darel Aker, Dave Tully and Bill Elzie of Teamsters Joint Council 37; Calvin Bissonette and Dana Hoadley of Glass, Molders, Pottery, Plastic and Allied Workers Local 139-B; Steve Dzielak of the Alliance for Retired Americans; Bruce

Easley, Dan Froner and Mike Murphy of Laborers Municipal Local 483; Rick Gilmore, Deanna Meyer, Mary Orr and Marla Rosenberger of Multnomah County Employees Local 88 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; UNITE HERE Local 9 leaders Jeff Richardson, Gloria Gonzalez, Jonah Kobayashi, Sophie Welcer, John Pulido, David Brown and Gayle Carnini; general managers Ron Gladney of the Benson Hotel, Norman Wha of the Paramount Hotel, Tracy Marks of the Hilton Hotel, Brendon Coffey of Aramark at the Oregon Convention Center, and Michael Bashaw of Coast Hotels; Norman Leyden of Musicians Local 99; William Lukens of Machinists Lodge 63; Wally Mehrens, retired executive secretary-treasurer of the Columbia-Pacific Building Trades Council; Bob Petroff, directing business representative of Machinists District Lodge 24; Gene Pronovost, president of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555; Maureen Thompson, director of Community Solutions for Clackamas County; and Julie Devlaeminck, office secretary of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council and a member of Office and Professional Employees Local 11.

## Building trades' Mohlis interested in PDC post

Organized labor has launched a campaign to get John Mohlis, executive secretary-treasurer of the Columbia-Pacific Building Trades Council, appointed to the Portland Development Commission, the quasi-independent development arm of the city of Portland.

Two of PDC's longest serving members — Chair Eric Parsons and Secretary Doug Blomgren — will step down after their terms expire in July.

The five-person commission is appointed by Portland Mayor Tom Potter and must be confirmed by the City Council.

Potter already has appointed three commissioners since taking office in 2005. The newest commissioners are Sal Kadri, a business owner, Bertha Ferrán, a mortgage consultant, and Mark Rosenbaum, a partner in a financial services business.

Potter had indicated during his campaign and after his election in November 2004 that he would consider appointing someone from organized labor to the commission. Labor leaders were disappointed when that didn't happen.

"The one thing lacking on this board for a long time has been a voice for the workers," said Judy O'Connor, executive secretary-treasurer of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

## Portland City Council takes hard look at PDC over construction pay

By DON McINTOSH  
Associate Editor

After several fruitless years spent courting favor with the Portland Development Commission (PDC), building trades union leaders are now going around the agency. They're taking their agenda directly to Portland City Council. Judging by recent meetings, a breakthrough may be nearing.

Construction unions have tried without success to get PDC to require contractors to pay livable wages and benefits on its projects. PDC is known as a funder of big-ticket construction projects — using public subsidies to spark private development. PDC divvies up \$200 to \$250 million a year, money it gets from special bonds that are repaid by a portion of the property taxes in "urban renewal" districts.

"We want to ensure that public tax dollar investment is used in ways that enrich working people's lives, not just line the pockets of a few developers and contractors," said Cherry Harris, organizer with Operating Engineers Local 701, at a June 7 Portland City Council meeting.

In meetings with PDC officials over the last four years, building trades union leaders have argued that PDC-funded projects should pay the "prevailing wage" rate. Under state law, workers on public construction projects can't be paid less than the prevailing wage — the standard rate for the area, as determined by an annual wage survey conducted for the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI). The

law is meant to ensure that contractors compete based on competence and efficiency, not based on who pays workers the least. It's also meant to encourage contractors to offer training and benefits to their employees.

But PDC has said that unless a project is public infrastructure, it is exempt from the prevailing wage law, arguing the law applies only if PDC contracts directly with a construction contractor or actually owns the project at its conclusion.

BOLI, charged with enforcing the prevailing wage law, ruled that the law *does* apply to PDC on mixed-use, private-public projects that the agency helps fund. But PDC sued in May 2005 to overturn that interpretation, and won in Multnomah County Circuit Court. BOLI is appealing that decision.

PDC's legal action outraged construction union leaders, like Jim Pauley, president of Iron Workers Local 29. Pauley says his blood boils at the thought of PDC paying lawyers with tax dollars to sue another government agency — all to avoid paying a decent wage to construction workers.

Pauley wasn't the only one to react that way. Portland City Commissioner Randy Leonard says he's become increasingly exasperated by the PDC. The lawsuit shows PDC is out of sync with the current City Council, Leonard said; and City Council wasn't consulted beforehand.

"They introduced this lawsuit basically on behalf of developers," Leonard told the NW Labor Press.

At a June 6 City Council work session, Leonard invited Labor Commissioner Dan Gardner and PDC Executive Director Bruce Warner to explain to the council how the lawsuit came about.

Warner deferred questions to his attorney.

Gardner told the council PDC wanted the fight: He tried to resolve the dispute but his calls went unreturned. And a task force he appointed to look at how prevailing wage would apply to PDC failed to reach consensus.

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