

Sheet Metal #16 re-elects Phillips business manager

Members of Sheet Metal Workers Local 16 elected officers, in ballots counted June 25. The 2,300-strong union has offices in Portland and Eugene and members in both production and construction.

Len Phillips was unopposed for a third term as business manager and financial secretary-treasurer. Also unopposed were incumbent business agents Delbert Brown, John Candioto, and Willy Myers; Dennis Dover outpolled two other candidates to win election to the business agent position held by Doug McCloughry, who retired.

Business manager and business agents are full-time paid positions. Of the business agents, Brown is responsible for the production members, while Candioto, Myers, and Dover will be responsible for the building trades members. Phillips directs all paid staff.



LEN PHILLIPS

Incumbents running unopposed for other offices included Rick Olander, president; Joe Welter, vice president; Ron Hergenrader, conductor; and William Carr, warden.

For recording secretary, Art Himm defeated incumbent Dennis Boyd.

For Executive Board, Charles Johnson, David McBride, Seth Kerner were elected to represent the building trades side,

out of six candidates; Joel Hutchinson outpolled one other member to represent Southwest Oregon; and Darrell Alcorn, Terry Hills, and Steve Nunamaker ran unopposed for election to represent the production side. Union trustees, re-elected unopposed, were Carrie Barber, Dan Carroll, and James Phillee.

All offices have three-year terms.

Phillips, 59, said one priority in the next term will be keeping the union's two pension funds in sound shape. Both funds, like most around the country, lost money in the stock and housing downturn, though the Local 16 pension losses were less than average.

Phillips said some members are out of work in the current recession, though not as many as were out in the recession of the early 2000s. Some employers are scheduling workers for short weeks to spread the work around and keep as many as possible employed.

Phillips said he hopes during this next term to merge the union's four construction contracts, covering about 1,400 members total, into one statewide contract. In preparation for that, last time around the four contracts were negotiated to expire on the same date — June 30, 2010.

And bargaining is currently under way with three of the larger production-side employers: Thompson Metal Fab in Vancouver and R&J Metal Fabricators and The Lynch Company in Portland.

Optimistic AFL-CIO looks ahead

By DON McINTOSH
Associate Editor

Judging by the mood at the June 19 meeting of the Oregon AFL-CIO Executive Board, organized labor may be near a resurgence. Congress is likely to pass the Employee Free Choice Act, Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain told Board members — though the “card check” part of the bill may be replaced by some other measure to make it easier to unionize. When it passes, Chamberlain wants affiliates of the state labor federation to be ready to hit the ground running.

In that light, leaders of affiliated unions will spend two days in early September at a strategy retreat led by organizational consultant Kevin Boyle, a member of the Communications Workers of America. Boyle will prepare for the retreat by interviewing labor figures about what could be done better. The meeting is expected to generate resolutions that would then go to the Oregon AFL-CIO's biennial convention October 25-27 in Bend.

The Board also voted to fund a promotional campaign. It could be something like a state-level version of the nationwide “Union Yes” campaign of the 1980s, which had lasting impact in raising labor's profile. To research and design the campaign, the Oregon AFL-

CIO will be contracting with media consultant Mark Wiener and pollster Lisa Grove. The campaign would get its public launch this autumn.

As the meeting progressed, Oregon AFL-CIO Communications Director Elana Guiney watched on her laptop computer a debate under way in the Oregon House. Led by Rep. Michael Dembrow, a leader in American Federation of Teachers (AFT)-Oregon, the House passed a bill giving Oregon workers the right to refuse to attend workplace anti-union meetings. Board members cheered when the passage was reported, and Oregon AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Barbara Byrd announced plans to hold a workshop for union organizers on how to use that new right in union campaigns.

For all the optimism, it was also apparent that splits within labor could threaten future progress, as tensions with former AFL-CIO affiliates came out at the meeting. Most unions remain under the AFL-CIO umbrella, where federation rules bar “raiding” each others' members. The idea is that unions are supposed to organize nonunion workers in their own industries, not spend resources persuading existing union members to switch unions. Accordingly, the Oregon AFL-CIO Board passed a resolution, modeled on one ap-

proved by the Nevada AFL-CIO, that condemns Service Employees International Union President Andy Stern and international officials for their role in a raid against UNITE HERE Local 226, which represents hotel and casino workers in Nevada. UNITE HERE, the textile and hotel workers union, is going through severe internal conflict — its former co-president, Bruce Raynor, left and formed a new union, Workers United, as an affiliate of SEIU. The new union is making a bid for UNITE HERE locals to break away and join it.

SEIU's involvement in the UNITE HERE dispute could result in UNITE HERE leaving the Change to Win labor federation and rejoining the AFL-CIO.

The Oregon AFL-CIO E-Board passed two other resolutions. One, sponsored by the American Postal Workers Union, declares support for HR 658, a bill in Congress that would prevent the U.S. Postal Service from closing postal facilities until considering the effect on the workers. U.S. Reps. David Wu and Peter DeFazio have signed on as supporters of the bill.

The other resolution, sponsored by AFT-Oregon, calls on the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) to audit all banks seeking bailout funds and make the audits available to the public.

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