

Unions at City of Portland demand to bargain over layoffs, reorganizing at BDS

The District Council of Trade Unions (DCTU) filed a "demand to bargain" letter July 22 with the City of Portland and is preparing to file several unfair labor practice complaints over layoffs and reorganization process at the city's Bureau of Development Services (BDS).

[As of press time, the city had not responded to the demand to bargain letter. Randy Leonard is the commissioner in charge of the bureau.]

In June, BDS announced that it would lay off half of its 300 employees by the end of the year. Approximately 43 people were let go July 31, with another 45 slated to be gone by Aug. 31.

BDS is the city's building department in charge of construction permits and inspections. It is primarily a self-funded agency that relies on fees paid by developers and homeowners. Due to the severe downturn in the economy, the bureau has been operating at a \$900,000 per month deficit and has spent down its reserves from \$13 million to \$4 million.

As layoffs began, issues were raised about the transfer of work between DCTU-represented members and the independent City of Portland Professional Employees Association (COPPEA), and over the use of supervisors, managers, and other non-represented employees doing the work of the laid-off union workforce.

AFSCME Local 189 is the largest local at the city and among the DCTU, which is an umbrella organization of locals. Unions that make up the DCTU include Electrical Workers Local 48, Machinists Lodge 1005, Operating Engineers Local 701, Laborers Local 483, Painters District Council 5, and Plumbers and Fitters Local 290.

COPPEA represents over 700 employees who work in professional and technical jobs for the city. It has raised concerns that BDS is not making proportionate staffing reductions in non-represented positions.

The DCTU contends that moving contractual work from one bargaining unit to another, or having non-repre-

sented workers doing the work of represented members is a subject of mandatory bargaining.

"At no time has the city and/or BDS management suggested the bureau would be reorganized in response to the layoffs," said James Hester, a field representative of AFSCME Oregon Council 75 and spokesperson for the DCTU.

"The DCTU believed all along that the city would handle the downsizing in accordance with its collective bargaining agreement," he said.

Hester said the city is obligated under the Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act (PECBA) to provide written notification to unions outlining the specifics of any reorganization and to bargain over the impacts of that decision, including wages, hours and working conditions.

Hester said DCTU's filing signifies the start of a 90-day bargaining process as outlined by PECBA. He pointed out that under PECBA, the bureau cannot implement and/or make any changes (including layoffs) until bargaining is complete. The DCTU has requested "any and all information relating to a BDS reorganization."

Challenge out to collect food at Labor Day picnic

American Federation of State, County, & Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Oregon Council 75 has made arrangements with Oregon Food Bank to have barrels set up at the Northwest Oregon Labor Council's Labor Day picnic at Oaks Park to collect food donations.

Barrels will be color-coded corresponding to union colors (AFSCME green, UFCW yellow, SEIU purple etc.) Members of those unions are encouraged to bring a food donation to the picnic. At the end of the day, barrels will be checked and the union with the most donations will be announced.

"It's just a bit of friendly competition for a good cause," said Ken Allen, executive director of Council 75, who issued a challenge to other unions. "All of us have had members facing hard times and the Food Bank has been there to help. Let's step up and help back."

Labor Day Picnics

Monday, Sept. 7, 2009

Bend — Labor Day Picnic at Pioneer Park in Bend. Noon – 5 p.m. Sponsored by the Central Oregon Central Labor Council. Contact Steve Williamsen at 541-647-2350 or Jerry Fletcher at 541-350-0265 for more information.

Eugene/Springfield — Labor Day Picnic at Jasper Park in Springfield/Pleasant Hill. 12 Noon. Sponsored by the Lane County Central Labor Council. Contact Pat Riggs-Henson at 541-914-6928 or Cj Mann at 541-913-0056 for more information.

Medford — Labor Day Picnic at TouVelle State Park in White City. 11 a.m. – to dusk. Sponsored by the Southern Oregon Central Labor Council. Call Kathy McUne at 541-664-0804 for more information.

North Bend — Labor Day Picnic at Ferry Road Park in North Bend. 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. Sponsored by the Southwestern Oregon Central Labor Council. Call Shawn Jennings at 541-396-3244 or e-mail at shawngj@msn.com for more information.

Portland — Labor Day Picnic at Oaks Amusement Park in Southeast Portland. 10 a.m.–5 p.m. The Labor Council will sell food scrip for 25 cents each. Three scrip will get you a hot dog and chips, two scrip a soda pop, and six scrip a beer. A deluxe bracelet for carnival rides costs \$8.75. The ride bracelet also includes admission to the roller skating rink. Guest speakers from 1 to 2 p.m. and pro wrestling matches will be featured throughout the day. Sponsored by the Northwest Oregon Labor Council. Call 503-235-9444 for more information or to order scrip.

Salem — Oregon State Fair. The Oregon AFL-CIO labor booth in the central canopy area continues to be staffed with union volunteers during the entire two weeks of the fair, including Labor Day.

Oregon AFL-CIO backs Trumka, Shuler

SALEM — The Oregon AFL-CIO has endorsed the ticket of Richard Trumka for AFL-CIO president, Liz Shuler for secretary treasurer, and Arlene Holt Baker for executive vice president.

Shuler is a member of Portland-based International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 125. She has served as executive assistant to IBEW President Edwin Hill since June 2004.

Trumka is secretary-treasurer of the national labor federation hoping to succeed President John Sweeney, who is retiring.

Another candidate running for secretary-treasurer, Professional and Technical Engineers President Gregory Junemann, last month suspended his campaign and endorsed the Trumka ticket. After meeting with Trumka, Junemann said he was confident the AFL-

CIO under the new leadership team would address the financial issues he raised during his brief campaign.

In a letter to Trumka, Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain praised all three leaders on the ticket and predicted that if they win they will "re-energize union members, help international unions and state federations rebuild their base, and unite labor with both our traditional allies and with new allies ready to restore our country."

Elections will be held at the AFL-CIO Constitutional Convention meeting Sept. 13-17 in Pittsburgh.



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