

Local Motion

December 2009

Union certifications and decertifications in Oregon and Southwest Washington, as reported by the National Labor Relations Board and the Oregon Employment Relations Board

Recognition elections

No union elections were reported in December 2009 by the National Labor Relations Board or the Oregon Employment Relations Board for Oregon and Southwest Washington.

Requests for recognition election

Name of employer Name of union	Location Number of employees
Oregon Housing & Associated Services (decertification) Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757	Canby 23
Budget Car Rental (NE Airport Way) Teamsters Local 305	Portland 33
Ashland Parks and Recreation Department Ashland Parks and Recreation Employee Association	Ashland 24
Labor Temple Cafe & Bar (decertification) UNITE HERE Local 9	Astoria 7
Willamette Graystone (decertification) Teamsters Local 962	Roseburg 134
Umpqua Dairy Products (decertification) Teamsters Local 962	Roseburg 134

After 18 months, Portland Public School teachers still without contract

Bargaining has been under way 18 months for a new contract covering 3,200 teachers, counselors, and librarians at Portland Public Schools (PPS), Oregon's largest school district.

The previous Portland Association of Teachers (PAT) contract expired June 30, 2008, but under the state's public employee collective bargaining law, contract terms are automatically extended. A state mediator has been working since September to help the two sides reach agreement on a new three-year deal that would be retroactive to July 2008. As yet, neither side has declared impasse, which would set a timetable for the district to impose its last offer or the union to give strike notice.

Union staffperson Nancy Arlington characterized negotiations as "dys-functional," with board members and human resources staff cycling in and out of the district bargaining team. In one recent bargaining session, Arlington said it appeared the employer representatives hadn't read the current contract — they demanded something that's already in it.

Sticking points in negotiations include health care, wages, workload, and layoff language.

The health care dispute is about what to do with any savings if PPS

joins a statewide insurance pool for school districts. PPS teachers get full-family health coverage through a jointly-run trust, but the trust could be terminated in May 2010 if the pool can provide comparable benefits at a lower cost. The current contract states that savings from such a move would be added to teacher salaries. This was a clause the union added to the contract in 2003 in exchange for union members agreeing to reduce benefit value by about \$100 per employee per month and start paying 7 percent of their health insurance costs.

Today they contribute \$96.66 a month, while the employer contributes \$1,104 a month. The District proposes to eliminate the contract clause that says savings from joining the pool should go back to raises; PAT's counter-offer is to use the savings and Trust reserves to reduce premium increases.

Meanwhile, teacher pay at PPS ranges from \$34,492 to \$68,884 with a 12-step salary schedule that takes education and years of experience into account; 51 percent of PAT members are at the top salary step for their education level, and the majority have a bachelors degree plus 60 post-graduate credits, the equivalent of a masters degree. In current negotiations, PAT is

asking for 2 percent raises in the first and third years, and in year two, a 2 percent raise for those at the top step. That's less than other PPS employees, and teachers in nearby districts, have received. PPS' counter-offer is 2 percent, 0 percent, and a 0 to 2.5 percent raise in the third year that would be tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Arlington said that third-year raise offer is disingenuous because it's based on the CPI for 2009, which is expected to be 0 percent, and PPS isn't proposing to use the CPI for 2007 and 2008 for the first two raises, because it would generate raises of 3.5 and 3.3 percent. In short, teachers would fall behind inflation under the PPS proposal.


"The district has been talking about shared sacrifice," says PAT president Rebecca Levison. "Our teachers feel like we've already sacrificed." PAT members agreed to work 10 days without pay in 2003 to help the district weather the last budget crisis, something no other district union group did.

PPS also proposes that teachers lengthen student contact time by 15 minutes a day. And the district wants to change layoff language in a way that would disadvantage experienced teachers who switch subjects. PAT rejects those proposals.

To show that members are unified in backing their bargaining team, PAT has held several large and well-attended rallies at school board meetings: About 1,500 frustrated and angry teachers and supporters came out at a Nov. 10 board meeting, and about 1,000 shut down a Dec. 14 Board meeting, at which Portland Jobs With Justice presented PPS Board its public sector "Grinch of the Year" award.

"[Our members] have been asked to do more with less, and they continue to step up," Arlington said, "but they don't feel respected or valued by the school board."

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