

# ...Portland sitting on \$120 million stash

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Council, and Jan. 9, the City's chief administrative officer Jack Graham (who heads OMF) responded with his own letter to City Council, which seemed to say "keep your hands off those funds."

"Internal service funds' balances are needed to meet the financial obligations of the internal service providers," Graham wrote.

Donohue, seeing the letter, was incredulous, saying the City had sworn in its CAFR that those funds had no outside restrictions on their use.

Local 483 kept at it, bringing it up at every public meeting. At length, the mayor's office agreed to answer Local 483's questions about the funds. Beetle, joined by union communications assistant Megan Hise, met April 9 with Mayor Sam Adams, the mayor's chief of staff, the head of human resources, and Graham. On the assumption that "where there's smoke, there's fire," Beetle smelled smoke and went looking for fire, but in the hour-long meeting, all he got was more smoke.

"We know that the city has got something in mind for this money,"

Beetle told the mayor and his aides, "and we'd like to get an idea of what that is." But they never really answer. An audio recording of the meeting shows that Graham basically re-reads his Jan. 9 letter, talks about how important reserves are to maintaining the City's exceptional AAA bond rating, and gives a general defense of the idea of putting money aside to buy police cars and computer servers.

Then, on May 3, Adams pulled a rabbit out of a hat: After hearing months of emotional testimony from workers and the public, the mayor fig-

ured out a way not only to avoid the worst of the proposed service cuts, but also to contribute \$7 million to three Portland school districts to lessen teacher layoffs. How had he done it?

The public explanation is that the mayor's budget trims overhead and administration. Instead of cutting front-line workers who provide the services, the mayor's proposed budget cuts whole layers of managers in some bureaus.

But wade into the nitty-gritty, and it seems that ... the mayor took Local 483's suggestion. The mayor's proposed budget appears to draw down internal service fund balances by about \$1 million, and reduce by \$3.9 million what bureaus pay into the internal service funds. And it finds another \$6.3 million savings in the OMF budget through such measures as "extend po-

lice vehicle life cycles" (\$238,000), "reduce 1900 Bldg MM Reserve" (\$210,000), line items which sound very much like tweaks to the internal service funds. Of course, it's not entirely clear that's what's happening.

Seeking confirmation, the Labor Press called the mayor's spokesperson and was referred to the OMF spokesperson, who promised that a City budget officer would call. Three days and several reminders later, the call hadn't come.

"I think we dodged a bullet," Beetle said, "because of members standing up and bringing attention to this early on."

The mayor's proposal still has to be voted on by City Council. The City is required to adopt a budget no later than June 30, the close of the fiscal year.

# ...TriMet Lift operator strike nets settlement

(From Page 1)

even dry on the subcontract, First Transit announced it was firing a dozen drivers and changing health and welfare benefits.

ATU called foul, saying such action would violate Section 13(c) arrangements it had and cause TriMet to lose federal funding. Section 13(c) is part of a federal statute that requires that employee protections — including their collective bargaining agreements — be certified by the Department of Labor and in place before federal transit funds can be released to a mass tran-

sit provider.

Jonathan Hunt, president of ATU Local 757, said its 13(c) arrangement with TriMet also requires contract disputes be settled through arbitration.

Hunt told the Labor Press that after the union complained to TriMet's then-general manager Fred Hansen about what First Transit was attempting to do, Hansen immediately intervened.

"He gave them the ultimatum to comply with the 13(c) agreement or forfeit the contract," said Hunt.

First Transit signed an agreement with the union on Jan. 29, 2010, in which, for the most part, they agreed

to comply with the 13(c) arrangement and assume the MV Transportation contract until a new deal was negotiated.

That day didn't come until this week.

A key sticking point has been wages. At the strike rally May 9, Hunt said First Transit's revenue under its contracts with TriMet increases 5 percent a year, yet its wage offer to employees was less than 2 percent a year. The wage increase, he said, was offset by a proposal that workers pay more for their health insurance.

"This foreign corporation is sucking huge profits out of the community and sending those profits overseas, while the folks who work and live in the community are being shafted. And TriMet is standing by and allowing them to get away with it," said Hunt.

Hunt said First Transit refused the union's request for arbitration and that current TriMet General Manager Neil McFarlane refused to intervene, claiming the Section 13(c) agreement on arbitration didn't apply to their lift service contractors.


"McFarlane is taking a position contrary to all of the general managers before him," said Hunt.

At a recent TriMet board of directors meeting, McFarlane, when responding to calls from the union and members of the public to bring the paratransit service in-house in order to save millions of dollars, said that if lift operators became public employees they would be subject to the no-strike law and that would not be good for getting a timely resolution of a contract.

"It is clear that McFarlane wants employees to strike, rather than prevent a disruption of service," said Hunt. "Well, it looks like McFarlane's wish came through."

Pickets went up at 5 a.m. on May 9 at the TriMet administration building at 4012 SE 17th Ave., Portland. The strike rally was held at 11 a.m. But before it was over, Hunt announced that First Transit had agreed to a federal mediator's request to return to the bargaining table.

The sides met May 10 without resolution. They reconvened on May 11, finally coming to terms at 1 a.m. on May 12.




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