

...Community benefits agreement

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ent discrimination.”

Maurice Rahming, immediate past president of the Oregon chapter of the National Association of Minority Contractors, explains that in the past, construction contractors didn't hire women and minorities. Racial and gender disparity continued after overt discrimination ended, Rahming says, in part because sons tend to follow fathers into careers in construction. And access to these jobs matters a great deal, because journeymen can earn \$39 an hour or more plus benefits — depending on the trade — on public construction jobs that are subject to state and federal prevailing wage laws.

The community benefits agreement is a breakthrough, Francesconi told the Labor Press, for several reasons: It's the first time in Oregon that a government has required project labor agreements on its construction projects, and it represents a new unity between unions and minority communities.

Nonunion contractors have often defeated proposals for project labor agreements, Francesconi said, by forming alliances with minority contractors or community members and arguing that unions don't work well with minorities.

“Here the opposite has happened,” Francesconi said. “Minority contractors

and community representatives want a relationship with the unions, and advocated for this project labor agreement. And the unions went a long way to provide training and support for minority and women workforce and minority businesses, and carved out this exception for disadvantaged minority- and women- owned businesses where they didn't have to join the union.”

Rahming, who is both a black business owner and a signatory contractor with IBEW Local 48, agrees: “Minority contractors have been pitted against the unions as if they're opposing sides of an argument. This agreement says, ‘You know what? We're not on opposing sides.’”

To test run the community benefits agreement, City Commissioner Randy Leonard offered up two Water Bureau projects that are already under way: the Kelly Butte reservoir replacement, and the Interstate Maintenance Facility renovation. The Kelly Butte project — to replace the 10-million-gallon above-ground steel tank with a 25-million-gallon reinforced concrete underground reservoir — had already been awarded to Hoffman Construction, but the City is modifying that contract. In the Inter-

state Maintenance Facility Renovation, the City will construct a 28,000-square-foot LEED Gold building to replace a 1925 building that rates poorly for seismic and fire safety and disabled access. An adjacent 38,000 square foot building will be built in a second phase.

The day the community benefits agreement was approved, City Council chambers were packed to the edge of the second-floor gallery with 175 people who turned out in support, most wearing red T-shirts made by CAWS bearing the slogan, “community benefits for all.”

Portland Mayor Sam Adams told the crowd the community benefits agreement is about “taking another step to become a city of the most equal opportunity for all Portlanders.”

Doug Tweedy, executive secretary-treasurer of the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters, commended the City Council for being the first agency to “step up to the plate and do the right thing.”

“Opportunity is what this is all about,” he said. “The disparity within our workforce and our contracting community is documented and does exist.”

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IN MEMORIAM

Oregon AFSCME Council 75 Staff Representative **JAMES HESTER** lost a three-year battle with lung cancer. He passed away peacefully in Portland on Sept. 9. He was 55 years old.



JAMES REED HESTER was born in Tacoma, Wash., on Aug. 14, 1957. His father died when Hester was six, and the family moved to Portland when he was 11. He graduated from Cleveland High School in 1975, and received an associates degree in journalism arts from Mt. Hood Community College in Gresham in 1977.

Hester lived for several years on the Lummi Indian Reservation in Washington, where he helped his in-laws (his sister is married to a tribal council leader) establish the communications department for the government of the Lummi Nation in 1981.

Hester enjoyed a varied professional career. He spent 12 years as a West Coast district manager for Sears & Roebuck, followed by a four-year stint as director of operations for the Portland Beavers baseball team. He spent three years working with an investment firm in Los Angeles, Calif.

In 1997 he returned to Portland and took a police records specialist position with the Portland Police Bureau — a

job he intended to keep only a short period while he attended Warner Pacific College to get a degree in business administration. But jobsite issues led him to become a union steward and activist with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 189.

Hester held a variety of positions with Local 189, ultimately becoming the elected president.

In August 2004 he was hired by Oregon AFSCME Council 75, serving primarily as the Local 189 staff rep. He also worked with Oregon AFSCME Executive Director Ken Allen negotiating the first AFSCME contract at the Portland Development Commission.

“James was a great member-leader and then a strong staff person for our members,” Allen said. “He had a strong commitment to making sure members got treated fairly on the job.”

Hester is survived by his mother, Helen; sisters, Barbara Howe and Pam Thomas; brothers, Rick Hester, Scott Hester, and Gary Lichty; and many nieces and nephews.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations to either the Pongo Fund, Oregon Humane Society, or the American Cancer Society.

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