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SPELLING IT OUT FOR PORTLAND CITY COUNCIL Low-wage employees of City rec centers want union recognition — and \$15 an hour.

LiUNA 483 to City: Let Rec workers into the union

Portland Parks & Rec employees look to get \$15 and a union

About 40 mostly youthful workers from Portland's recreation and community centers showed up to City Hall Dec. 2 to remind City Council of a public commitment Mayor Charlie Hales made Oct. 21 to recognize more workers into the union.

The union, in this case, is 920-member Laborers Local 483, which has waged a relentless campaign to regularize and unionize contingent workers, and to bring up their wages.

Local 483, which at the time represented about 80 permanent workers at Parks and Rec, won a significant arbitration May 1. Arbitrator David Stiteler found that the City had been violating the union contract by assigning bargaining unit work to non-union employees classified as seasonal or casual. He ordered the City to stop. But how to comply is subject to interpretation. Both parties agreed to start with union recognition for those most obviously doing bargaining unit work. Thus, 86 more workers have now been added to the union — with sizable raises in pay and

benefits.

"I believe in the power of the union," Will Zeigler, 24, told the Labor Press outside city council chambers. Moments later, as fellow Parks & Rec workers watched, Zeigler called on City Council to do the right thing. Zeigler earns up to \$13.25 an hour after five years teaching swimming and music at Mt. Scott Community Center — but he's currently on annual layoff after exceeding a city-imposed hours cap. "If I don't make it into the union but other people do, then my work was worth it," Zeigler told the Labor Press.

The two sides have set, and extended, deadlines for what to do with hundreds of other Rec workers who fall into a grey area. Will the City make the union fight for the right to represent each new individual, or will the City voluntarily recognize new members? Local 483 organizer Tom Colett says he got an answer at a Dec. 11 meeting with city managers: About 50 more will be added to the union bargaining unit now, and the City will look at a new union classification covering up to 300 more rec workers, via an ordinance set to go to City Council by Jan. 16.

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