

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

City workers say their wages need to reflect the new high-rent Portland

By Don McIntosh

Over 100 members of Laborers Local 483 gathered across from City Hall May 25 to protest the slow pace of contract bargaining with the City. Local 483 is negotiating on its own for the first time since it left the multi-union District Council of Trades Unions last year. Contracts for two Local 483-represented groups expire June 30 — a unit of about 600 workers in 37 classifications who maintain roads, sewers, pump stations, wastewater treatment facilities, parks and community centers; and a fluctuating unit of 400 to 700 workers who staff city recreation centers. Wage increases are the top issue for both groups.

Kassey Diaz, a member of the union bargaining team for the maintenance unit, says she and her co-workers haven't gotten more than cost-of-living raises in the 30 years she's been a City utility worker. And that's becoming a real problem, because the Consumer Price Index (CPI) that the raises are based on isn't re-



LIVABLE PORTLAND: Mt. Scott Community Center worker Kate MacQuarrie and union staffer Tom Colett present petitions to Commissioner Chloe Eudaly's chief of staff, Marshall Runkel. The message: City pay must consider the cost of housing. "I would love to not have to live with four roommates," MacQuarrie said.

flecting the reality of the rapid rent and home price increases of recent years. The CPI has been rising at 1 to 3 percent a year, but rents are rising more than 10 percent a year. Local 483 wants a cost-of-living increase "floor" of at least 2.5 percent, while City managers want to keep the current 1 percent floor. Local 483 is also proposing that the City start thinking about paying wages comparable to other high-cost

West Coast cities, like Seattle and San Francisco.

"Our public employees are getting forced out of the city they work in," said Local 483 spokesperson Tom Colett. "Are we going to become the next New York or San Francisco, where we have workers who come into the city to work but can't afford to live here?"

The two sides also differ over comp time policy: Local 483



UNITED FOR A FAIR CONTRACT: Local 483 members rally in Terry Schunk park, across from City Hall.

wants to return to an 80-hour "rolling" comp time bank; the City wants a fixed limit of 120 hours a year, and for comp time to accrue only for unscheduled overtime.

For the rec center unit, meanwhile, priorities are longevity pay for long-term workers, and a starting wage of at least \$15 an hour.

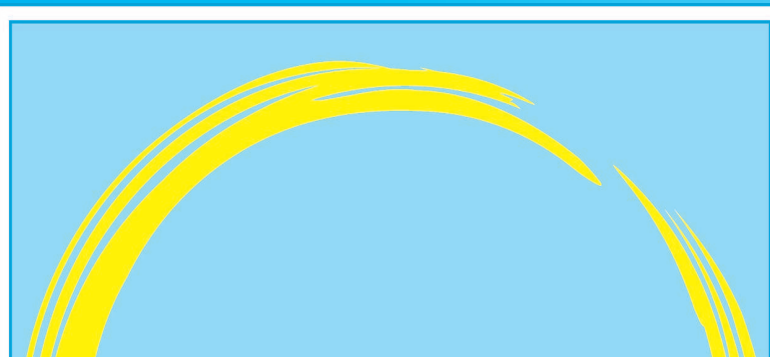
"We want a living wage for all City workers, no exceptions,"

said bargaining team member Aubrie Cooper, a part-time front desk worker at Matt Dishman Community Center.

So far, City negotiators haven't agreed to the proposed raises.

"Our answer to their 'no's' is 'no,'" Local 483 president Will Tucker told rallygoers.

ONLINE See more rally photos at our Flickr page at <http://bit.ly/2rpslWI>



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