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Tentative City of Portland agreement delivers sizable raises for members of Laborers Local 483

By Don McIntosh

Laborers Local 483 has reached tentative agreement with the City of Portland on a pair of contracts that will raise wages for over 1,000 city workers. One contract covers about 600 laborers at city bureaus that maintain roads and sewers. The other covers a seasonally fluctuating workforce of 400 to 700 workers at city recreation centers, including several hundred newly unionized workers.

City laborers win longevity, shift differential, other raises

The city laborers agreement would raise wages in multiple ways:

- All members get annual cost-of-living increases based on the consumer price index, with a minimum of 1 percent and a max of 5 percent.
- Workers who've been at the City more than 10 years get a 2 percent longevity raise.
- Members working swing or graveyard shift get increased "shift differential" pay for the first time in 20 years: Swing shift will now pay a \$1.50-an-hour premium (up from \$0.84), and graveyard shift will



Members of Laborers Local 483 turn out at Terry Schruck Plaza at a May 25 rally for a fair contract at the City of Portland.

- pay a \$2-an-hour premium (up from \$1.16). Those premiums will rise with inflation from now on.
- Workers in 12 classifications get one-time increases ranging from 1.5 to 10 percent — to bring them more in line with their counterparts at comparable cities.

Up to now, when the city closes for extreme weather, "non-essential" workers like office workers have gotten a paid

day off, but "essential" workers, such as those who operate snow plows, haven't. The new contract would give them a paid day off, to be taken later.

Local 483 did make several concessions, including an end to a requirement that the City hire first from among existing employees when hiring for new positions. The contract also penal-

izes members if they don't schedule one medical checkup every two years; members who fail to do so would pay 10 percent of health care costs, compared to 5 percent currently.

Rec center pay will top \$15

Under the recreation center contract, starting wages will rise to \$15 and more, and shift differentials will match the city laborer group. The contract also provides cost-of-living raises, plus raises of 3 or 5 percent on top of that for several classifications. Those who work at least 30 hours a week on average for six months will get employer-provided health insurance. Employees will also get "just cause" discipline and grievance rights after 3,120 hours and three years of work.

Members are voting on both agreements by mail, with ballots due Aug. 7. The union bargaining team is recommending ratification. If approved, the contracts will run four years, through June 30, 2021.

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