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UNION ORGANIZING

Union drive launches at New Seasons

By Don McIntosh

On Wednesday, Nov. 1, 9 a.m., a dozen employees of New Seasons Market filed into the company's fourth floor headquarters in the rehabbed former high school now known as Revolution Hall, and asked to speak with CEO Wendy Collie. As they waited in the reception area, awkward minutes crept by — until one worker began humming the union anthem “Solidarity Forever,” and the rest joined in.

Collie, they were informed at length, was not available to see them. So the workers presented a letter to her assistant, accompanied by signatures from 260 workers, announcing the formation of a new organization, New Seasons Workers United. The letter requests a meeting, and asks the company to sign a code of conduct committing to respect workers' right to organize.

Half an hour later, joined by



WILL NEW SEASONS AGREE TO UNION NEUTRALITY? “If this company truly practices the values that they promote, they should have no hesitation in agreeing to this set of standards,” declared union supporter Rev. Andrew Guthrie of Lynchwood Christian Church at the North Williams New Seasons.

another couple dozen workers and community supporters outside the New Seasons grocery store on North Williams Ave. in Portland, they made a public announcement: A union organizing

campaign has begun at New Seasons — backed by United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555.

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DIVERSIFYING THE BUILDING TRADES

Portland City Council mandates diversity in public construction

Portland City Council voted 4-0 Nov. 8 to adopt several ordinances to increase participation of women and minorities as workers and contractors on public construction projects. City projects over \$25 million will operate largely union under what amounts to a project labor agreement; those between \$10 to \$25 million would try to meet the same targets but without a formal role for unions. City managers will report back later on the success rate of the two approaches.

Meanwhile, a new fund will set aside 1 percent of hard construction costs to fund pre-apprenticeship training programs to prepare women and minorities for construction trades, and technical assistance for women- and minority-owned businesses.



Though Commissioner Chloe Eudaly (left) was out for the vote, all five members of Portland's City Council are in support of a new policy that enlists unions in efforts to get more women and minorities in construction.

“This is a living, breathing document that can be adjusted to meet our needs,” said Mayor Ted Wheeler introducing the ordinances.

“I appreciate the leadership you've shown to get us to where we need to be today,” said Columbia Pacific Building Trades

Council Executive Secretary-treasurer Willy Myers. “We've gone way past window dressing to actually having a policy that works.”

The City of Portland has hundreds of millions of capital projects in the pipeline, including wastewater treatment plant updates and a new filtration plant.

WASHINGTON

Big night for Washington labor as votes come in

After six years, Democrats retake Senate majority. And a top labor political aide wins election to Seattle City Council.

The Nov. 8 general election resulted in some great news for working people in Washington, said the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC), AFL-CIO.

In the critical 45th Legislative District race to determine which party controls Washington's State Senate, labor-endorsed Democrat Manka Dhingra beat Republican Jinyoung Lee Englund, 55.4 percent to 44.6 percent in King County.

Other labor-endorsed De-

mocrats capturing Senate seats were Rebecca Saldaña in District 37, and Patty Kuderer in District 48. In District 31, Republican Phil Fortunato defeated Democrat Michelle Rylands, but both candidates were endorsed by WSLC.

The state labor federation fell short in Senate District 7, where endorsed Democrat Karen Hardy lost to Republican Shelley Short.

In the House, labor-endorsed Democrat Vandana Slatter defeated Republican Ciaran Dougherty in District 48, and labor-endorsed Republican Mor-

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COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

ATU reaches deal at TriMet

After almost a year of rocky negotiations, TriMet and Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 757 announced Nov. 10 they've reached tentative agreement on a new three-year contract covering 2,500 union-represented bus and light rail operators, mechanics, cleaners, transit police officers, and customer service representatives.

Local 757 President Shirley Block says the deal was struck after an 8 a.m. meeting over coffee and orange juice with TriMet General Manager Neil McFarlane, as the two sides prepared to go to binding arbitration. The final step in that process was for each side to make a final comprehensive contract proposal. TriMet included approximately 40 of ATU's proposals in its proposal, and that proved to be enough to clinch the deal.

If ratified, the agreement will provide an immediate 3 percent raise retroactive to the Dec. 1, 2016 expiration of the previous contract; another raise of 3.25 percent Dec. 1; and a third raise of 3.25 percent on

Dec. 1, 2018. It would also provide a one-time \$1,000 payment to about 300 journey-level rail mechanics and a 6.6 percent step increase at the top of the scale for up to 300 workers who clean buses and light rail platforms. And it increases the night shift differential to \$1 an hour (up from 25 cents) for maintenance employees, dispatchers, road and rail supervisors, and others.

TriMet dropped several proposals the union objected to, including one that would have reduced opportunities for service workers to apply for apprentice openings as mechanics. The agency also agreed to a cost-neutral health insurance plan change that will save retirees money.

The union agreed to allow light rail vehicles to be overhauled off-site by outside contractors, and it dropped its demand to return to a 90-10 health premium split.

The agreement now goes to union members for a ratification vote. If approved, the agreement would run through Nov. 30, 2019.