

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Breakthrough in new teacher contract at Portland Public Schools: class size limits

The long-delayed agreement also raises pay 8 percent and adds a day to the school year.

A new union contract at Portland Public Schools (PPS) contains a major advance for teachers (and students and parents): Oregon's first enforceable limits on class size.

The three-year agreement negotiated by Portland Association of Teachers (PAT) covers 4,000 teachers, psychologists and other professionals who serve over 49,000 students at the state's largest school district.

PAT has pushed for years to get PPS to commit to limits on class sizes, but top administrators declined to discuss it. Under Oregon law, class size is a "permissive" subject of collective bargaining, meaning districts don't have to negotiate over it with unions if they don't want to. PAT president Suzanne Cohen credits Guadalupe Guerrero, PPS' new superintendent, for the district's change of heart. "He said, 'If this is what's important to you, then let's talk about it,'" Cohen says.

Under the new agreement, the district spells out class size

goals for all grade levels. If those thresholds are exceeded, the district may give teachers the option of having a half-time educational assistant, or receiving overload pay equal to 3 percent of base salary for each additional student. The thresholds are 24 students for kindergarten classes, 26 for grades 1 to 3, and 28 for grades 4 to 5. For middle and high schools, the thresholds limit how many students teachers may see in a day: 150 (or 220 for performance classes) for middle school; and 160 (or 225 for performance classes) for high school.

"This is really historic," said Cohen, who worked as a middle school math teacher before taking leave to serve as a union officer. "We have been wanting this for so long. We want to be able to give students one-on-one individual attention."

The new contract also:

- limits case loads for psychologists;
- reduces the amount of time educators must spend in meetings;
- increases the amount of paid time they have to plan lessons;
- adds one instructional day to the school year (now 177);
- maintains current benefits; and

- provides annual across-the-board wage increases of 3 percent, 2.75 percent, and 2.25 percent.

Cohen called the wage package a fair settlement, and said teachers compromised on wages to secure the class size limits. With the raises, Cohen says PPS teacher wage levels will no longer be the lowest among metro-area school districts. Under the contract, the current annual salary for a first-year teacher with a master's degree is \$48,609 — rising to \$72,621 with 12 years experience.

Most of the raises will be retroactive to the July 1, 2016, expiration of the previous contract. That's because the new agreement took more than two years to negotiate, and the three-year period it covers is halfway complete. The new agreement runs through June 30, 2019.

Cohen said members voted overwhelmingly to approve the new contract in a Feb. 5 ballot count. The PPS board ratified it Feb. 8.

Meeting in Salem this month, state lawmakers are considering a bill to make class size a mandatory subject of bargaining.

POLITICS

Building Trades backs Nick Fish, Loretta Smith for City Council

The Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council has endorsed Loretta Smith and Nick Fish for Portland City Council. Smith, a two-term Multnomah County commissioner is running for the seat being vacated by City Commissioner Dan Saltzman. Smith is term limited from running for a third term at Multnomah County. Fish is seeking re-election to a third term on the council.

The May primary race for Saltzman's seat will be competitive, with four other candidates filed to run. The deadline to file is March 6. If no candidate receives a majority of votes in the May 15, 2018 primary election, the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes will advance to the Nov. 6, 2018 General Election ballot.

For the May primary, CP-BCTC also endorsed:

- **Multnomah County:** Chair Deborah Kafoury for re-election. Susheela Jayapal for commissioner in District 2, the seat being vacated by Loretta Smith.
- **Clackamas County:** Paul Savas for re-election as Commissioner for Position 2, and Sonya Fischer as Commissioner for Position 5. Pamela White for County clerk.
- **Washington County:** Ryan Deckert for County chair.
- **Metro Regional Council:** Shirley Craddock for re-election as councilor in District 1. Lynn Peterson for council president. Peterson is a former Clackamas County commission chair and former director of the Washington Department of Transportation. Christine Lewis for councilor in District 2, and Dana Carstensen for councilor in District 4. Carstensen is a member of Laborers Local 483 and works for Metro at the Oregon Zoo.

...Project labor agreement

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will be outfitted with cutting-edge labs, research facilities, prototyping tools, imaging facilities, human subject interaction spaces and an innovation hub. Phase one will include two buildings totalling 160,000 square feet, joined together by a glass terrace with a pedestrian bridge connecting the buildings to the main campus. Total cost is \$225 million. It is scheduled for an early 2020 opening.

Frew said UO balked at the building trades' proposal for a master PLA, which would have required all subcontractors to be signatory with a union. The sides eventually came to terms on a deal that combines language from various project labor agreements — with much of it modeled after one the Columbia-Pacific Building Trades signed with Multnomah County on the new courthouse now under construction in Portland.

There is language in the PLA limiting nonunion subcontractors from using more than 50 percent plus one of their core workers on the project. The remainder of their employees will have to be dispatched by the respective union craft, if workers are available. Non-union subcontractors that hire union-referred employees will

have to adhere to the wage and fringe benefits package of the applicable collective bargaining agreement. Otherwise, construction wages and benefits will be determined under state prevailing wage laws.

There are also requirements for subcontractors to utilize women, minorities, veterans, and apprentices, and be registered with a recognized apprenticeship training program, Frew said.

Nike founder Phil Knight and his wife Penny donated \$500 million towards development and construction of the new facility. UO approved \$225 million, and the Oregon Legislature okayed \$50 million in state bonds during the 2017 session (with possibly \$40 million more to be authorized this session). The university still must raise \$500 million from donors.

The PLA also was signed by the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters.

Two organizations affiliated with OSBCTC did not agree to some of the language in the PLA and did not sign off on it. They are Plumbers and Fitters Local 290, and the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades District Council 5, which includes Painters & Tapers Local 10, Floor Coverers Local 1236, and Glass Workers Local 740.



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