

Union ★  
Update

OPEIU  
Local



*For Local 8 Members at Forterra NW*

May 19, 2022

# Management Uses Stall Tactic -- No Response to 2022 Wage Proposal

On Tuesday, May 17<sup>th</sup> the Union Bargaining Team (Christine Stephens, *Project Manager Riparian Restoration*; Ashe Olds, *Accounts Payable and Payroll Specialist*; Jason Walsh, *Project Manager Community Development*, Corinne Cosentino, *OPEIU, Local Organizing Director* and Diane Arnold, *Union Representative* along with Suzanne Mode, *Union Business Manager* and Phoebe Feldsher, *Union Representative*), met with management's Bargaining Team (Colin Boyle, *Summit Law*; Margaret Griffiths, *CFO*; Rachel Valdez, *Chief People, Culture & Technology Officer* and Suzanne Skinner, *Forterra Corporate Legal Counsel*) for our second session of negotiations. At our last session on May 3<sup>rd</sup> the Union Bargaining Team presented the first of many contract proposals and management agreed to respond to those proposals and our wage proposal which was presented to management on March 22<sup>nd</sup>.

As we discussed in the March 21 meeting for all union Forterra employees, when employees unionize, employers are supposed to maintain their practices until we negotiate something different, including wage increases. When we discussed this with Forterra's attorney Colin Boyle months ago after questions from union employees about a 2022 wage increase, he told us that Forterra doesn't have a practice, so if union staff wanted an increase for this year, we should bring them a proposal. So, we

had the March 21 meeting and collectively decided to propose a 15% increase for all union employees retroactive to January 1, 2022. We shared that proposal with management the following day and have been awaiting a counterproposal from Forterra since.

Despite having promised at our first bargaining meeting to respond to our wage proposal at the next meeting, management now told our Bargaining Team that they cannot respond to our wage proposal until we present all our economic proposals. This is highly unusual because the economic proposals are generally presented near the end of the negotiation process and the process to negotiate and ratify a contract often takes at least a year. Our Union Bargaining Team suggested to management that whatever wage increase they provided for 2022 would be taken into consideration if by some miracle negotiations were complete in 2022.

Colin Boyle, Management's lead negotiator, stated that the board had approved a 2022 budget that provided a wage increase for all staff but only non-union staff received wage increases.

## **Union Bargaining Team Transition**

Diane Arnold will be leaving OPEIU Local 8 in mid-June and Suzanne Mode, *Business Manager*, will assume the role of lead negotiator and Phoebe Feldsher, *Union Representative*, will assume the Union Representative role for Union members at Forterra.

## **Fourth Bargaining Team Member Needed!**

***Thank you Maya Klem*** for your work on the Union Organizing Committee and Bargaining Team. Best wishes for your next career adventure.

A farewell from Maya

“I am so proud to have helped organize this union at Forterra. And while my time at Forterra has come to an end, I look forward to staying connected with all of you professionally and personally.

I feel strongly that this union is the best path forward towards making Forterra a best place to work, so long as leadership and the bargaining team are able to work collaboratively. I hope all are able to see the union as the positive thing it is and can be. I’ve seen a dozen or so union organizers past and present put their heart and soul into this union because of their care for the organization and hope for what is possible when employees are supported adequately and have rights. Please continue to support our union, it’s your union and the more involvement from staff the better for all!”



***If you are interested in joining the Bargaining Team, or have any questions, please contact Union Representative Phoebe Feldsher at [phoebe@opeiu8.org](mailto:phoebe@opeiu8.org) or 206-441-888- ext. 119 or Organizing Director Corinne Cosentino at [corinne@opeiu8.org](mailto:corinne@opeiu8.org) or 206-441-8880 ext. 113.***



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