

Union ★
Update

OPEIU
Local



For Local 8 Members at City of Ellensburg

November 29, 2023

Labor Management Meeting Update

Your Union Stewards and Union Representative met with the Director of Human Resources, Library Director, and the Financial Director last week for Labor Management. We brought forward concerns that we have observed and topics that some of you had shared with us. Please see the topics and responses below.

Library Safety (expanded to safety for all building/locations)

Union Concern: Safety of employees in direct public access. How is the City managing this and what are the future plans to ensure that employees have the tools they need for theirs and public safety?

Employer Response: They do have cameras up around the Library and have requested that a Police Officer do a periodic walk-through to show a presence. The Library Director confirmed that she does provide training and welcomes staff input at their yearly all staff retreat. There has been no talk or plan of what to do at the Adult Activity Center or the City Pool. They have no ongoing plan or course of action but do welcome ideas from employees regarding this topic.

Union Response: This is concerning as this topic becomes more and more relevant as the temperatures outside get colder and draw more people inside seeking a warm place to be during the day. Employee safety should be an ongoing topic of conversation within the City. We asked if there was any plan to install metal detectors and we were told no. We would like to see another staff position added that could move throughout the city locations to provide a security presence. We did inquire as to

why the office doors at City Hall all have locks that require codes to enter and plexiglass in public facing areas and that hasn't been done in other areas; the response was that those doors are unlocked during business hours and the plexiglass is for germs.

Increase to Insurance premium amount

Union Concern: The premium amount that each employee pays has increased. Our contract language states that the employer will pay 90% and the employee pays 10%. The City is continuing this practice, but because there was a change in premium amounts the City had an obligation to notify the Union about this change because it falls under the Mandatory Subject of Bargaining since it is a change in your wages. The City did not provide the Union with notification or program information until the Union requested this information, and that was well after it was shared with all employees.

Employer Response: They want to be clear that the City is self-insured (with the exception of the employees who work under the Teamsters contract) and that rates do change yearly. (it appeared) They did not feel that the Union needed to be notified and seemed very frustrated that was the expectation of the Union. They went on to say that they have a very short time between calculating the premium amount and instituting the change and feel that they would not have time to also meet with the Union and possibly negotiate how those rates impact employees.

Union Response: We informed management that the Union should be presented with this information prior to it being published and that we do have the right under the Public Employee Relations Council that this is a Mandatory Subject of bargaining and that we could make ourselves available next year with very little notice to not interfere with the short timing that the City has to publish this information.

Growth of the City and Staffing levels

Union Concern: The population of the City continues to increase and this increases the workload for City employees. Is there a ratio that the City uses to increase positions in conjunction with the population increase?

Employer Response: There is not a ratio or metric that they use. New positions are added based on budget, regulations, outside funding, and manager input.

Union Response: This is concerning as it seems like employees are being overtasked and there is not a plan in place to add additional employees unless the manager is able to advocate and find funding for additional staff.

Outdated Position Descriptions

Union Concern: Many employees are working with outdated position descriptions that do not reflect their current duties.

Employer Response: Position descriptions are reviewed when a position is vacated or if an employee requests a review.

Union Response: No further discussion at this meeting

Position Posting and Timing

Union Concern: There are some positions that have been vacant for several months and some that get posted immediately. We are concerned with the process not being consistent and employees covering these vacant positions.

Employer Response: If a position has an updated Position Description the position can be posted right away. If it doesn't then they must go through the process of reviewing the position description. This process starts with the direct supervisor, then the director of the department, and then human resources. Only when the position description has been reviewed and approved can it be posted. Staffing levels and availability are also factors in how long it can take.

Union Response: No further discussion at this meeting

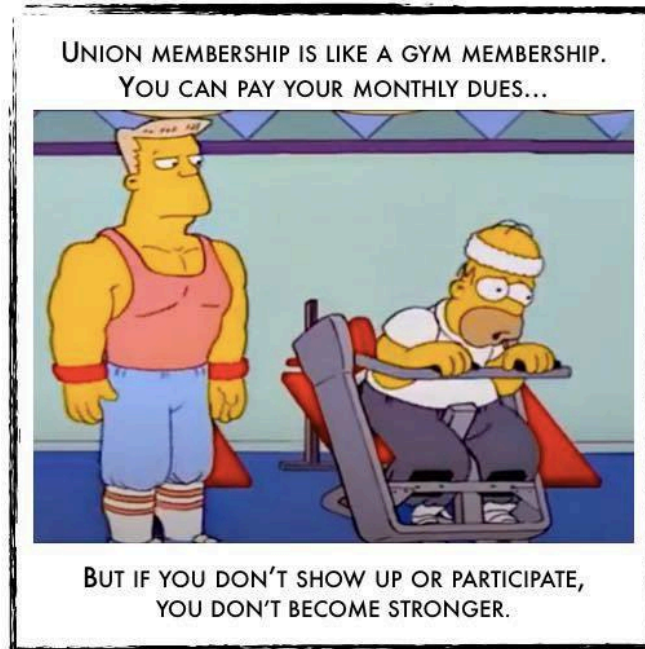
We ended the meeting with a request from the Union to schedule our upcoming Labor Management meeting on a consistent schedule.

Outstanding Grievances

Currently we have two open grievances at Step 3 that the Employer has refused to meet with us regarding. Today the Union sent these to the City Manager as outlined in our contract. Hopefully she will meet with us; if not, we will move these to the next Step which is Mediation.

Do you want more from the Union?

We need more Stewards and Leaders. We need involvement from the Members so we can work effectively and serve all members. We need to hear from you! We need responses to emails and folks to attend our meetings. YOU are the union and without you we will continue to struggle. Please contact Angie if you are interested in serving in a Leadership role.



***If you have any questions, contact your Union Representative,
Angie Wedekind, at (509) 306-0586, angie@opeiu8.org***



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