



Santa Cruz City Watchdog



www.seiu521.org

May 2012

831-824-9255

LIBRARY WORKERS ASK JOINT POWERS BOARD TO REVIEW BACKLOG AND OTHER ISSUES DUE TO REDUCED STAFFING

On April 9th, the Santa Cruz County Joint Powers Board had a rude awakening due to the implementation last year of the servicing and staffing model. Photos of empty shelves and crates of books to be routed into the system were shared with the JPB and members, highlighting the need to increase staffing to meet the needs of the public.

Weeks before the JPB meeting, SEIU 521 members lobbied many board members, among them the President of the Board, Sam Storey. Each was given anecdotal information on the major issues that workers (and patrons) face each day, among them the lack of materials on the shelves (books, DVD's, CD's), an outdated computer system and the inappropriate use of the self-check system. The Library Director, Teresa Landers, had recommended in February that the board consider additional staffing to meet some of these challenges.

Additionally, since workers' hours have been reduced, and now most are being asked to spend their time at the service desk, other administrative tasks have fallen by the wayside. Although temporary workers have been hired to address some of these tasks, finding the time to train them around their schedules is a major challenge. Several board members commented on the lack of participation and reliability of volunteers while at the same time ending the increased use of volunteers to address the staffing needs of the library. The tasks that volunteers are being asked to do are not recreational programs that

fall under the definition of "volunteers." The JPB has failed to realize that they cannot replace skilled workers with volunteers.

Testimony given by union members from the service, supervisory and mid-managers bargaining units made an impact on the board's decision to support remediation. With an eye towards finding a workable solution which will benefit both patrons and workers, we look forward to the May board meeting. But our job is not done yet.

We need your voice in supporting quality services and appropriate staffing for our community.

Contact your JPB members at www.santacruzpl.org and tell them to approve the recommendation to increase staffing hours to help address the backlog and technological issues.

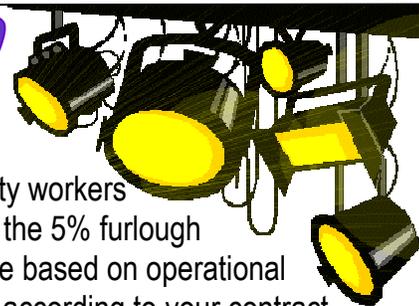


Chief Steward, Leslie Auerbach in discussion with Joint Powers Board President, Sam Storey

stay
informed

- ◆ Visit your chapter web page frequently: www.seiu521.org
- ◆ Like us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/SEIU521
- ◆ Or, simply text 521 to 787753 to subscribe to text alerts.
(Standard text messages rates may apply.)

CITY HIGHLIGHTS



End of furloughs in sight?36 weeks and counting! - Effective June 23rd, City workers will now work 38 hours instead of 36, or will be furloughed by 5%. Please note that the 5% furlough schedules will not include additional holiday hours or holiday closure pay and will be based on operational needs. Seniority and noticing requirements for schedule assignments will be done according to your contract language. If there are any issues or questions you may have on the new furlough schedules/questions, please contact Sonia Laracuente or Gary Klemz at (831)824-9255.

Health care cost containment committee - All seven City bargaining units are meeting since late 2011 to examine the high cost of health care and how both the City and workers will be paying for the premiums in the next negotiations. With many changes anticipated due to the Affordable Care Act enacted by the Obama Administration, local governments are looking for options to offer at the bargaining table.

Reclassification Projects - Under Section 24 of the current contract, workers may request reclassification of their jobs one time a year. Two requests are honored in the service classifications. Once a reclass study is complete, the job specs are updated and posted and the Union has ten days to meet and confer over the effects of the changes. Currently there are three reclasses due to be completed within the next several months. They are: Account Clerk II, Parking Attendant and Administrative Assistant II.

CITY CHAPTER STEWARD COUNCIL

City chapter officers met in late February to discuss what vision, structure and leadership direction would be needed for close to four hundred city workers, members of SEIU 521. They decided that the first order of business is to call upon front line activists and stewards and get their input in order to plan for the future.

Once gathered, ten activists engaged in thinking about the reasons they have made a commitment to support their worker organization. A common thread was found throughout the discussion: a strong passion for fighting for their rights and the rights of others, coupled with a strong sense of social, economic and political equality for all.

Challenges which activists face are varied: from personal conflicts and barriers with themselves to constant pressure from city management and apathetic co-workers. And yet they remain firm in their belief in their union! When asked why, one leader spoke about being raised in a pro-union household and how staying united in their struggles and pushing back on the injustices got them results and community support.....very much like what many public employees are experiencing in states like Wisconsin.



The Steward Council will be convening again on Wednesday, May 23rd at the Mission Street union hall at 5:45pm. Come and tell us what is your vision of a strong union and stronger workforce...but more importantly, tell them what you are willing to do to create it!