



## Another Vote – What is Going on?

**O**n Dec. 5, 2008, Local 17, City of Seattle members voted to extend the Collective Bargaining Agreement for an additional year to December 31, 2011. They also voted to place a 2% limit on any possible employee increase in retirement contributions if the pension system reaches an unfunded liability of greater than 30 years, and if the actuary, retirement board recommended, and City Council voted to increase the contribution rate.

As a result of the one-year contract extension, another VEBA vote will be taking place shortly. Local 17 members who will be eligible to retire in 2008, 2009 or 2010 already voted last fall to keep the VEBA in place for those years. Members who are eligible to retire in 2011 must now decide if they want to have the VEBA in place for that year.

To refresh your memory, a VEBA account is a medical savings account designed to help defray expenses when you retire. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) allows such money to be put into the account and allows the money to be withdrawn for medical expenses. Prior to 2005, if you retired from City service, you were given 25 percent of your unused sick leave in a cash payment. The money was considered income and the members paid taxes on the cash-out.

With the approval of the VEBA, 35 percent of your unused sick leave is put into the VEBA account if you retire. It is not taxed going in and you are not taxed as you withdraw the funds for medical purposes. Your account balance also earns interest. Each year since the 2005 agreement, members have voted to leave the VEBA in place.

Will you get a ballot? You may or may not, depending on your age and years of service to the City. Only those members who are eligible to retire in 2011 will receive a ballot. If you receive a ballot please take the time to fill it out and return it via mail or in person to the Local 17 office.

## New City of Seattle Chapter President Elected

**O**n Jan. 8, 2009, Dan O’Sullivan was sworn in to become the new City of Seattle Chapter President. O’Sullivan works as a Senior Civil Engineer in Seattle City Light. He has served on the last two Negotiating Teams to bargain the Collective Bargaining Agreements for 2005-2007 and 2008-2010. “I am excited to get started as the new chapter president and look forward to having a chapter that provides for members a forum to share information and do the good work of the Union,” said O’Sullivan.



O’Sullivan

The term for Chapter President is one year. Stefanie Hegland was re-elected as Chapter Vice-President and Larry Works was re-elected as Chapter Secretary-Treasurer. They will both serve a one-year term.



Swearing in

## Seattle Chapter to Alternate Between Noon and Evening Meetings

At the January 8, 2009 chapter meeting, a motion was passed to alternate holding chapter meetings during the lunch hour with the current practice of holding them in the early evening. Members who are unable to attend in the evening expressed an interest in the change, and those in attendance at the meeting agreed. This will be done on a trial basis for the next few months. The schedule is as follows. All meetings are to be held the second Thursday of the month in SMT 4050/60.

2/12/09	5 to 8 p.m. (evening meeting)
3/12/09	12 to 1 p.m. (noon meeting)
4/09/09	5 to 8 p.m. (evening meeting)
5/14/09	12 to 1 p.m. (noon meeting)

City of Seattle UNION NEWSLETTER  
Jan. 2009



Published by the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, Local 17, AFL-CIO  
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## Local 17 Brown Bag Lunches Educate Members

Local 17 has sponsored a series of brown bag meetings for our City of Seattle members to learn more about City benefits.

The meetings focused on the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), City Retirement and Career Quest. On March 12, there will be another brown bag on Alternative Dispute Resolution.

In October, 2008, Kevin Host, the Director of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) gave a very informative presentation about the wide variety of benefits that City employees can access without cost.

"The City's EAP is a resource when there's nowhere else to turn," explained Kevin Host.

Some of the services are:

- EAP provides up to six free visits a year for an employee or family member to meet with a counselor, on work time, with some travel time included;
- EAP has resources and referrals for financial and legal questions, with the initial appointment at little or no cost;
- EAP has referrals for those dealing with aging and ill parents or children, even those who live out of town;
- EAP has a vast online library of articles on topics of interest;
- EAP is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 800-553-7798 to speak with a master's level counselor. Services are confidential.

### CITY RETIREMENT SYSTEM

In November 2008, Cecelia Carter, Executive Director of City of Seattle's Retirement System, engaged in a lively discussion with Local 17 members about how the Seattle City Employees' Retirement System ("SCERS") works, and what has been happening during these difficult economic times. In addition, Carter answered many questions about what systems are in place and what is being done to keep the system healthy.

She explained that for some time, other jurisdictions had suggested to those running the City of Seattle's retirement plan that the City was being too conservative in their investments. Carter told those in attendance that it was precisely that caution in investing that has kept the plan as healthy as it is, whereas other jurisdictions are doing a lot worse right now.

### SAVE THE DATE FOR ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION BROWN BAG:

On **March 11, 2009 in SMT 1600** Dane Keehn & Stephanie Bell will come talk and answer questions about the City of Seattle's Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program. Come learn about available mediation services.



A Brown Bag lunch session.

### CAREER QUEST

In January 2009, Virginia McHenry, Director of Career Quest came to speak about the program. Those in attendance were very interested to learn what benefits were available, such as scholarships of \$1500 to \$1800 per year for those who have been employed at the City for at least two years.

McHenry explained that there are trained Career Quest coaches who help employees who are interested in career change or advancement. Reasons for accessing the program, she said, include a desire to change jobs, wanting to keep up with changes in one's job, or concerns that one's job will be going away.

After a simple application process, McHenry meets with applicants to go over the program, and what people can expect to get out of it. They are then assigned a coach who helps them meet their goals. Help is available in resume writing and interviewing skills, as well as many other tips on how to prepare for and get the job you want.

People are helped in finding and learning about jobs they might want to get, and then are given assistance in obtaining the qualifications necessary to be hired for such a position. More information is available on the inweb at <http://inweb/personnel/career/careerquest.asp>.