

# “Working Together Works”

## IFPTE – 21 ♦ City of Oakland Chapters



### *Bargaining Bulletin #14*

### *-February 3, 2009-*

#### **Contract Negotiations Continue**

Local 21's bargaining team met with City negotiators on January 26 and February 2, 2009. After concluding the bulk of bargaining over the impact of layoffs and shutdowns and the City's rejection of our contract extension proposal, negotiation topics have shifted back to contract provisions.

The City responded to eight of the 32 non-economic proposals Local 21 put forward last September. After four months of deliberation over the union proposals, the City's responses were mixed.

Months ago Local 21 had proposed one master contract for all Local 21 Oakland units including the City Attorneys, where certain provisions would apply specifically to the City Attorney's unit. The City rejected this proposal, as well as another which stated that the City cannot require an employee to use their bilingual skills absent a bilingual premium.

Other sticking points included the City's desire to eliminate UM1's protections against discrimination on the basis of political affiliation, civil service status, and just cause rights. Movement was made on a handful of other issues, including some tentative agreements on minor clean up language proposals.

The union's next steps will further address clean up proposals, as well as formulate an economic counterproposal in response to the City's call for economic concessions. The next session is scheduled for February 9.

#### **Local 21 Advocates for VTN, Retirement Incentives**

In October 2008, Oakland's City Council requested information from staff on the implementation, cost, and savings associated with programs that could help reduce staffing levels and salary costs without resorting to layoffs. The two programs under investigation were Golden Handshakes, a retirement incentive through CalPERS which provides a two-year additional service credit, and VTN programs operated by Oakland and other public employers.

On January 27, the City of Oakland's Budget and Finance Committee received a report from Oakland's Finance and Management Agency (FMA) on both topics. Unfortunately, the report strongly argued against VTN usage and any retirement incentive program without relaying accurate and comprehensive information.

FMA Management responsible for the report acknowledged that Golden Handshakes would help reduce the City's staffing level through attrition and simultaneously yield a cost savings, but stated that "given the gravity of the City's current financial position, layoffs would be a more effective way to provide the City with significant cost savings."

The report delivered to Council mischaracterized how the early retirement incentive program works, miscalculates potential savings, and underestimates the financial and operational costs of layoffs. Furthermore, it illustrates how little FMA values City employees as Oakland prepares for additional rounds of layoffs and budget cuts.

Fortunately, not all City leaders echoed these values. City Administrator Dan Lindheim and Committee members Quan, Nadel, and Kernighan acknowledged that

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implementing a program which promotes voluntary separation from the City and reduces the overall number of layoffs is a more humane and respectful way to reduce the City's staffing levels given the difficult options ahead.

Local 21 representatives spoke at the Committee meeting and rebut many of the statements made by FMA staff. The union's Research Department conducted its own valuation of the early retirement incentive and found that Golden Handshakes cost a small fraction of the significant savings they achieve, even when some of those positions are refilled – the benefits of the program heavily outweigh its costs. Additionally, as the City faces a succession planning crisis, the incentive would decrease future hiring and training costs by reducing the number of layoffs and loss of institutional knowledge by maintaining more staff with less seniority. Local 21 provided the Committee with a parallel report of its findings and point-by-point response to the City's flawed report.

The City's report also argued against VTN usage, citing that the program is inequitable to employees (despite being voluntary), disruptive to City services, and will result in overtime. The City has no evidence to support any of these claims, and conveniently overlooked the inequity, disruptiveness, and need for overtime created by layoffs and mandatory shutdowns.

Council members on the Committee requested additional information from staff on both Golden Handshakes and VTN at their March 28, 2009 meeting. They also welcomed additional research from Local 21 as they prepare to make a final decision.

**CAT Leaflets Mayor's State of the City Address**  
On January 26, Local 21 CAT members leafleted at Mayor Dellums' State of the City event. The flyer (attached) stressed that everyone – City employees, the Mayor, Council, and residents, must share in finding a solution to Oakland's budget crisis.

Special thanks to CAT members who distributed over 500 flyers: Joe Castro, Karen Tom, Brenda Fransaw, Martin

Sharp, Chuck Johnston, Zeny Ramos, Steve Danzinger, Miloanne Hecathorn, Andrea Turner, Bruce Levitch, Maryann Sargent, Tom Manley, and Audrey Montana.

**Take Action on Shutdown Days – Friday the 13th**  
Join us on Friday, February 13 and March 13 to educate Oakland residents about the City's shutdown days and cuts to services. All Local 21 members are encouraged to sign up for a three hour leafleting shift at the City building of their choice. Contact Chuck Johnston at [cjohnston@oaklandnet.com](mailto:cjohnston@oaklandnet.com) to sign up!

**Delegate Assembly Report Back**  
Last weekend's Delegate Assembly was a huge success! Local 21's new officers were sworn in, including Oakland VP Jeff Levin, and Tom Manley, VP for Legislative and Political Action. Delegates heard reports from two members of the SF Board of Supervisors, IFPTE International President Greg Junemann, Local 21's outgoing local officers, and Executive Director Bob Muscat. Attendees also participated in a program addressing the economic challenges we face and strategies for strengthening our union, and members who volunteered during the 2008 campaign season were recognized for their efforts to elect labor friendly leaders. Local 21's next Delegate Assembly will take place at the Oakland Marriot on Saturday, June 6, 2009.



Renne Sykes (L) Christia Mulvey were two of the many Oakland members recognized for their political volunteerism. They received commemorative Local 21 2008 coffee mugs.