

# Professional & Technical Engineers, Local 21



AN ORGANIZATION FOR PROFESSIONAL, TECHNICAL & ADMINISTRATIVE EMPLOYEES

San  
Francisco  
Edition  
April 2007

## Creation of Cost Estimating Unit at DPW

For the last few months Local 21 has been negotiating with Department of Public Works (DPW) to create a specialized unit within the Bureau of Construction Management that supports the work of Bureau of Architecture, Bureau of Engineering and Bureau of Construction Management in cost estimating, scheduling and claims analysis of DPW projects.

The impetus behind our efforts came about when DPW requested two as-needed contracts on cost estimating, scheduling and claims analysis worth \$1.5 million. We inquired about the need for contracting out these functions. The department claimed that, based on a Board of Supervisors' audit, 45% of the Bureau of Engineering's estimates were either too high or too low. Some of the reasons offered were cost increases in steel, cement and fuel. The department also claimed that according to their own research, cost estimating for routine projects at DPW are mostly accurate; it is only the more complex and large scale projects that present problems.

We argued that since cost estimating is a vital function for an engineering department, DPW needs to have a specialized unit, with talented individuals who choose to make cost estimating, scheduling and claims analysis as a career. We also proposed that employees should have an established career path for specializing in these areas and cautioned that the Department will not be able to attract and retain talented individuals if there are no promotive or career advancement opportunities.

The City does not have classifications outside the engineering series which pay the requisite salary for attracting experienced employees with expertise in this area. With the cooperation of Department of Human Resources and Department of Public Works, we proposed the creation of

positions and a career ladder for this unit.

The culmination of these efforts finally bore fruit at the March 19, 2007, Civil Service Commission meeting. In a letter directed to the Civil Service Commission, we requested support from the commissioners to encourage the creation of the specialized unit. The Commission and DPW agreed, and the Commission instructed the union and DPW to present them with a joint progress report semiannually.

## San Francisco Unified School District Update

Our members at the San Francisco Unified School District have been negotiating a new contract since March 7, 2007. The contract expired more than three years ago. Since then, we filed an unfair labor practice charge against the District emphasizing the lack of reciprocity between District employees and the City. An example of the disparity is the incredible difference when District wages are compared to those paid to the same classifications within CCSF. We are currently appealing the decision by the administrative law judge to the PERB.

Many of our proposals include moving our members towards a more equitable work environment where our School District members enjoy the same salaries and benefits as those of City employees in the same classifications. We are also proposing improvements in the contract language. Since our last meeting, the District has given us an economic proposal that does not address the fact that our members have not received a pay raise in five years as well as the need for future raises. The District contends that they are offering this to compensate for the past years without a contract. The District has also not offered any adjustments for equity to compensate for the disparity, or percentage differences, between the School District and the City.

Our next session is April 19, where we will continue our discussions on wages.

## **Know Your Rights: Subcontracting**

Contracting out refers to the practice of a City department contracting with an outside employer to do City work rather than have City employees do the work.

Sometimes this makes sense. For example, there may be a one time need for a specialized function that no one in the City is trained to provide. An example would be the design and installation of the new Permit Tracking System for the Department of Building Inspection and Planning Department. And sometimes a City project is so large that outside contractors are needed to help City employees get the job done. An example would be the engineering and construction work that is needed on the \$4 billion Water System Improvement Project at the Public Utilities Commission.

Many times it does not make sense. Often, departments opt to contract work out that City employees could do more efficiently and at less cost than an outside group. This may have been done through lack of knowledge on the part of the department as the communication and planning forecasts for many of the City's departments are not adequate. This may also be done for improper reasons, such as someone wanting to do a favor, or through the desire for an illegal kick back from an outside contractor. Local 21 monitors contracts to try and make sure work is kept for City employees and to see that the City and taxpayers are not burdened with unnecessary, expensive contracts.

Departments who wish to contract out work must go before the Civil Service Commission for approval. Contracting for any outside service relating to public infrastructure is regulated by the San Francisco Administrative Code Section VI. Our MOU (Section 101-105, pages 17-18) requires that departments notify us of their intent to proceed with a contract and give us information about their plans, including what the contract is for, what classifications are impacted, and the amount of the contract. Our MOU also allows us to meet with departments about contracts and discuss alternatives to contracting out the work. We must be given pertinent information we request and the City must take steps to make sure people with knowledge about the contract be present at the

meetings.

If what we are told does not add up, then we go to speak before the Civil Service Commission and ask that the contract not go forward. It has been our experience that at this point, it is very difficult to stop a contract. This is why we have been working very hard on ensuring that City departments communicate with each other on upcoming needs for all services. It is also why we have been working on planning and projection requirements from departments so last minute decisions by departments are not contracted out.

This is one of the most important parts in our contract, both to preserve our members' jobs and to protect the City.

## **EDF Monies Exhausted**

The monies set aside for fiscal year 2006-2007 in the Employee Development Fund have been depleted effective April 5, 2007. Any requests submitted to DHR (44 Gough Street location) with the required paperwork before April 5 will be reimbursed. If you requested to have funds encumbered, you must submit the required documentation to DHR within three weeks of completion in order to be reimbursed. Requests not processed in this fiscal year may be processed after July 1, but they will count against your FY 07/08 \$2,000 allocation.

Please check with your departmental personnel division if you have questions about the status of your request.

### **Political Action Committee Meeting**

There will be a meeting of the San Francisco Political Action Committee on April 17th at 12:00 noon in the Local 21 office. The meeting is being called by union VP for Legislative and Political Action Dean Coate to discuss early endorsements for the upcoming election cycles (San Francisco-based races only).

Any interested member of the union may attend. Any candidates who are recommended by the PAC during this meeting will be voted on by the San Francisco Council at its next regularly scheduled meeting (Wednesday, April 18 at 12:00 noon).



**Professional & Technical Engineers, Local 21 (IFPTE/AFL-CIO)**

1182 Market St, Room 425 • San Francisco, CA 94102

Phone: 415.864.2100 • Fax: 415.864.2166 • Website: [www.ifpte21.org](http://www.ifpte21.org)