

**TECHNICAL EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
MONTHLY MEETING – March 19, 2003 (12 noon – 1 p.m.)
Meeting Summary**

Board Members Present: Ken Madden, President
Elizabeth Morgan, First Vice-President
Eric Mandel, Treasurer
Patty Overby, Secretary

Medical Benefit Package Implementation

Ken reiterated that Wastewater members had voted to approve the County's medical benefit package with receipt of five days of vacation leave. Members should have seen these extra vacation days on their last pay stub.

Eric reminded members that if they are interested in either revising or implementing the Flexible Spending Account that they should do so by April 1st.

Questions should be referred to Rose Langford at Benefits (684-1556).

Status of Contract Negotiations

Ken noted that Dave Crippen was unable to make today's meeting and that both he and Elizabeth Morgan would give an update on contract negotiations.

- Wastewater mediation was scheduled for 2/21 but was cancelled by TEA. Sessions are now scheduled for April 9 and 24. Jim Cline is lead negotiator.
- Transit mediation was scheduled for 3/13 and was cancelled by TEA and rescheduled for 4/3. Transit will also be meeting sometime the following week – schedule being finalized to discuss the "what if" proposal by the County. TEA Board approved Dave Crippen's taking over for Jim Cline as lead negotiator.

Questions and discussion centered on:

- Does interest arbitration allow TEA to strike? (Elizabeth said according to federal and state law no – Transit has interest arbitration as the next step if mediation fails. She stated that before you can go to interest arbitration, the mediator must certify that you have done your best to resolve issues through mediation and to list the items that cannot be mediated.)
- Where are we with the salary review? (Elizabeth said that TEA has been obtaining information from various agencies. Both TEA and the County have been trying to get Sound Transit's wage information but Sound Transit has not submitted this information. TEA feels it is critical to have this information for comparative purposes. She added that Jim Cline has filed a "Freedom of Information" request with Sound Transit. They have

five days for an initial response; but obtaining the actual information will take longer.

- What issues are left on the table for Transit? (Elizabeth noted the main issue is salary. Other items are around safety equipment and recognition.
- When can we estimate having a Transit contract? (Elizabeth responded that TEA would like to have something before Rick Hayes, labor negotiator for the County, leaves on sabbatical in July(?). That action could be a contract to present to the membership for a vote or certification to go to interest arbitration.
- Do you anticipate Transit employees receiving a similar medical package as was accepted by Wastewater? (Elizabeth stated that the County wants all employees to be on the same medical package and that TEA will bargain for something similar to what Wastewater employees got.)
- What happened to the County's intent to implement its last, best and final offer to Wastewater employees? (Ken said this fell by the wayside once TEA requested and received mediation from PERC).
- How soon can Wastewater employees expect a contract to vote on? (Ken noted that the Wastewater Negotiating Team wants a contract to come after Transit has completed their contract. He added that the mediator is moving things along quickly.)

Treasurer's Report (Eric Mandel)

Balance \$5500 (as of 3/19/03), with the monthly legal retainer paid but one voluntary contribution paycheck outstanding. Expected month-end balance projected at \$7300.

Total outstanding debt is around \$82,000 (\$24,800 Total interest bearing long term debt to Cline; \$ 9,000 member voluntary contributions (2003 YTD); \$41,000 member voluntary contributions (2002); \$7,000 member voluntary contributions (prior years)

Financial Plan Update (Eric Mandel)

Eric reviewed the debt owed by TEA. The purpose of the proposed financial plan is to get rid of the debt and pay back members that have been making voluntary contributions by the next contract. The goal is to pay off the interest bearing debt to Cline first before paying back member voluntary contributions. He noted that the Bylaws state that the TEA members have to vote on dues and dues structure. He presented the following options to the Council of Reps. at their last meeting to get feedback and wants ideas and feedback before coming back to the TEA full members April 16 with a specific recommendation from the Board. He added that the final recommendation would be brought to the full membership at the May 21 meeting for a vote. Implementation of the financial plan would occur following contract ratification by the members.

Eric also added that Cline's contract expires the end of this month and that we could expect to see an increase in his costs, which would add to the total long-term interest bearing debt.

Options include:

✓ Option A - .6% Dues

For an employee with a \$20/hr. salary – cost would be \$9.60 a pay check; for an employee with a \$30/hr. salary – cost would be \$14.40 a pay check.

✓ Option B - .7% Dues

For an employee with a \$20/hr. salary – cost would be \$11.20 a pay check; for an employee with a \$30/hr. salary – cost would be \$16.80 a pay check.

Discussion centered on:

- What about an initiation fee? (could do but not recommending at this time – Local 17 charges .8% dues plus an initiation fee. The pros for an initiation fee include: can accelerate the payback of the debt; for those that have chosen not to voluntarily contribute dues, it would be a one time hit while crediting those that have already been paying dues voluntarily, new employees joining in the future would pay for efforts and hard work that the organization has already done.)
- What ongoing expenses are expected from Cline after members ratify the contract? (Eric noted Cline has a monthly retainer fee and this is more economical than an hourly cost – this would be ongoing no matter who TEA hires.)
- What does the monthly retainer buy? (Eric said the agreement specifies the type of services that will be provided, and includes unlimited support for negotiations, grievances, contract enforcement, and collective bargaining rights enforcement.)
- What is the interest on Cline's debt? (Eric replied it is 6% or roughly \$100 a month).
- Suggest look an option where TEA pays off Cline's interest bearing debt once the contract has been ratified in a one-time assessment to members. (Eric will look into this.)

Victoria Beach asked for feedback on this from the Council of Reps. prior to their April 9th meeting.

Grievance Process Preliminary Report (Elizabeth Morgan)

Elizabeth said that a typical union has a shop steward, which TEA does not. The Bylaws call for setting up a Grievance Committee chaired by the First Vice-President.

She is considering setting up a set number on the Grievance Committee and asked if 1 member per 50 employees would be equitable with a set term and a certain percentage turning over each year. She also envisions providing some training to Grievance Committee members. The Committee would be available to meet with TEA member and supervisor if there are issues. She noted that the goal is to prevent issues from getting to the grievance stage. The Committee can provide advice, ask as a liaison for setting up early

meetings to try and resolve issues before having to go through a grievance process.

Elizabeth also stated that the purpose of the TEA's representation for members is to make them whole. There are certain issues that are not appropriate for TEA to handle – this includes sexual harassment or any other tort related issues. Those specific issues would need to be pursued separately by the employee with help from an outside legal counsel. TEA can provide advice to members on this.

Elizabeth asked for feedback and any good and bad experiences members have had in the past with unions and grievance procedures. You can email her at work or home, call her, or meet with her outside to discuss ideas and feedback.

She will present a handout at the April 16 meeting for discussion and additional feedback; a specific recommended proposal will be submitted at the May 21 meeting for discussion; and a final recommendation for Bylaw amendment will be presented at the June 18 meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 1 p.m.

Patty Overby, TEA Secretary