

August 2005

Opening Remarks Negotiations 2005

By Steve Marincel,
2822 Business Representative

It's not business as usual for our union in contract negotiations this year.

Our members are angry and frustrated. They have endured two years of zero wage increases while most other local government employees have had either one year or no years of zeros. While quality, world class public services have continued to be provided by our members, who are doing more with less, our members' wages have not remained competitive. By the time the current contract expires our members will not have had a raise in 3 years, since January 2003. Many more of our members cannot support themselves on the wages the county currently pays. And they cannot afford health insurance for their families. (None of this should be a surprise to you, or anyone else, as the consumer price index has increased by 7% since January 2003 and health insurance increases have been in double digits.)

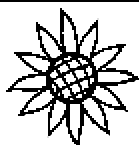
Add to this the fact that by its actions in giving **other** employees wage increases in 2004 and 2005, the county has admitted to our members that it had money all along for a wage increase. The county had additional money for wage increases during the last set of contract negotiations, while insisting that it did not. Is it any wonder that the Unions' trust of the employer across this bargaining table has been undermined?

That said, we need to get an agreement.

We are here to negotiate a fair contract. In the past the Union has worked hard to get a contract. And we're prepared to do so again. In fact we've already been working on these negotiations. Last year we started working on these negotiations by launching a property tax levy campaign, something we will be doing again. This year AFSCME did a lot of heavy lifting at the legislature in partnership with Hennepin County. As a result the county is better off fiscally because of these efforts. And we expect that this will be reflected in the outcome of these negotiations.

As I've said, we're prepared to negotiate a fair contract. What we are not prepared to do is work hard all the way through this process and then accept a poor settlement. Our members care deeply about the people of Hennepin County and the services that they deliver. But in the event we cannot reach agreement on a fair contract we will be organized and ready. We have a more active, involved and informed membership. And we have the backing and all the resources of the much larger 40,000 member AFSCME Council 5, as well as the active support of our national union.

We make a difference in the lives of the people of Hennepin County that we serve. During the term of the current contract, our members and your employees have continued to provide the quality services the citizens of Hennepin County expect. We deserve quality compensation and benefits for the work we do. We demand it.



August Membership Meeting

Tuesday, August 9
7:00 p.m.
Ridgedale Library

Special order of business:
Donation to State Workers
Hardship Fund

September Membership Meeting
Tuesday, September 6
7:00 p.m.
Brookdale Library

For our members who are
physically challenged,
please let us know if special
accommodations are needed.



Building an infrastructure to secure a fair contract

By: **John Korman**

(Editor's note: this article ran last month in the Local 34 Newsletter.)

As we all remember, we were not able to negotiate a fair settlement in our last contract with Hennepin County for 2004-2005. The county aptly maneuvered us into a situation where we were forced and manipulated to accept a contract of zero and zero wage adjustments and substantial health insurance contributions for many of us (thus, in effect, taking a pay cut without additionally factoring in the cost of living increases over the last couple of years). But we cannot only project blame onto the county for this situation being allowed to occur. We, as union members, were also responsible. How? We were **not prepared** to take needed action when the county decided to balance the budget on our backs. When any two parties enter into negotiations, one of the parties is apt to have an unfavorable outcome if negotiating from a position of weakness. At the end of our last negotiations for 2004-2005, you may recall that our negotiation committee was not able to make a recommendation if we should vote to accept or reject the contract. The official recommendation was "no recommendation." Why? Because we did not have a plan or team in place to carry out a strike if the contract offer by the county was rejected by the membership.

For some time now, many activities have been occurring within our nine Hennepin County union locals to prepare for our next round of contract negotiations to begin on July 18th, and tentatively wind up on November 14th. The Master Negotiations Committee has completed its work in developing a contract proposal to bring to the county at the time negotiations begin on July 18th. A committee known as the **Action Committee** is planning events to help influence a fair contract settlement. One event the committee already has planned is a rally to occur outside of the Government Center on July 18th at 12 noon to help kick off negotiations.

Another very important team that is assembling is the **General Strike Committee** that is composed of members across all our different locals. Rita During of AFSCME Council 5, has been providing strike training to a group of members across the locals who will make up this committee that will have us prepared for a strike in the event that it is necessary. Following the second strike training session provided by Ms. During, committee assignments were made. Below is the structure of the initial union members who volunteered for assignment to the various committees:

<u>General Strike Committee</u>	<u>Headquarters Committee</u>	<u>Picket Committee</u>	<u>Finance & Hardship Committee</u>	<u>Community Relations Committee</u>
David Tremewan (552) Co- Chair	Laura Merkle (34), Chair	Steve Martinetti (34), Chair	Kevin Ihrke (34), Chair	Sue Wick (552), Chair
John Korman (34) Co-	Laura Flistand (2938)	Dawn Klingman (2822)	Walter Hanson (2822)	
Plus - chairs from all other	Sue Wick (552)	Noni Karkasov (552)		
		Jean Ayer (34)		
		Peggy Bennett (34)		

<u>Internal Communications Committee</u>	<u>Family & Social Committee</u>	<u>Kitchen Committee</u>
Susan Herlifska (2938), Chair	Gretchen Shanight (2938), Chair	Sue Gillham (34), Chair
Joann Middaugh (34)	Brian Arneson (34)	Cate Wagner (552)
Chris Sprague (552)		Julie Zinski (34)
		Chela Guzman (2938)
		Bobbi Wigfield (34)

Please consider helping out by joining one of these committees. If interested, please contact one of the Co-Chairs of the General Strike Committee for more information. You may reach **David Tremewan** at (612) 348-3718, or **John Korman** at (952) 888-0485. David or John will be happy to send you a copy of our strike manual titled, "To Be Prepared." This is an excellent publication that gives us all specific information we need to effectively organize for a strike. Within the manual, you will be able to review the functions of the different committees that would help you decide which committee you may be most interested in serving on.

The members already on these committees realize that the thought or prospect of going out on a strike is understandably a serious concern to many members. Efforts are also underway to provide members with information on how to make it through a strike. In the near future, everyone will receive an excellent publication the General Strike Committee is assembling titled, "Member Survival

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Kit.” You will find very useful information that will reduce many fears you may have about a strike.

Possibly, a strike can be avoided if the county realizes we’re ready to do what we have to secure a fair contract that will restore our respect and value. When thinking about how we have been regarded by the county in the past and present, consider some of the following:

1. While we settled for a 0 & 0, the county administrator received a \$14,000 bonus.
2. While we settled for a 0 & 0, the non-union nurses received 4% & 5% raises.
3. While we settled for a 0 & 0, the county took action to have the salary of the Metropolitan Health Plan Director (a county job) raised from \$75,192 - \$111,156 to \$111,156 - \$150,000. This represents a 48% increase at the low range, and 35% increase at the high range.
4. While we settled for a 0 & 0, our county board pursues increasing the sales tax to help the Twins fund a new \$450,000,000+ ballpark.
5. While we settled for a 0 & 0, all the other metro counties were receiving increases during the same contract period, now leaving us at 5th or 6th in the 7-county metro area where formerly we were #1. For example, we used to have higher salaries than similar workers do in Ramsey County. Now, just as an illustration, a child protection worker at the top of his/her pay range in Ramsey County makes just a shade under \$10,000 per year more than the same worker in Hennepin County.
6. While we settled for a 0 & 0, the county most recently took action to have a large number of non-union positions at HCMC “adjusted” anywhere from 4% to 8%.

It is time to restore our respect and value! We will only do this if we are prepared to take whatever action is necessary to secure a fair contract settlement. Please join us in these efforts!

The Rally

“I’m a union member in local 2822 and I wanted to say that I thought the rally was a refreshing and uplifting event. With less workers (early retirement) and no pay increases you start to feel what’s the point. You work more for less, doesn’t make sense. I just felt compelled to let you know it was a big pat on the back for me. Thank you.”

Council 5 Executive Director Eliot Seide declared that the workers at Hennepin County do important work and deserve a raise. “I promise you that AFSCME will fight to help you keep your head above water,” Seide said. He led the enthusiastic rally goes in chanting, “**We’re the front line, not the bottom line!**”

Hennepin County Commissioner Peter McLaughlin said he and fellow Commissioner Gail Dorfman “stand here today to honor your work, the services you provide, and we stand here today to say you deserve a fair contract. You make this community better.”

Commissioner Dorfman added, “When I look at our communities, I know they’re healthy and vibrant largely because of the work that you do everyday.

The way we thank you, the only way we have to thank you, is by giving you adequate pay and benefits for the excellent work you do.” Commissioner Dorfman said she never wants to ask Hennepin County employees to sacrifice pay and benefits again.

For fantastic photos and more details of The Rally, check out the following web site: <http://www.afscme2822.org>, after clicking on the scrolling words, then click on the “related links” to Council 5, Local 34 and Workday Minnesota. Merry Brigham, the Local 2822 web master, has done a terrific job of capturing the fun, the enthusiasm and the solidarity of The Rally.

Special acknowledgement goes to the Local 2822 members of the Hennepin Action Team. Mary Dwyer, Jessica Trujillo and Walter Hanson put in many hours with members of the other eight locals on the Action Team to provide a unifying event: “United to Make a Difference.” We should all thank them for the fun, the flyers, the balloons and the stickers! Great job!!!



What’s next?

The Rally was a huge success. But that is just the beginning of our Contract Campaign. The next event may not be as colorful as The Rally, but it is possibly more important.

The Action Committee’s next effort is the Union’s Property Tax Levy Campaign for a Responsible Maximum Levy. Members are encouraged to attend the County Board meeting on August 30, 2005 beginning at 1:30pm on A-24 of the Government Center. Our members voted at the July 5th Membership Meeting to pay lost time for up to three hours for up to twenty-five members. Please contact Molly Malecki at: Mmafscme2822@aol.com if you want to attend and be reimbursed.

We will be there to show our support for the setting of a **RESPONSIBLE** Maximum Property Tax Levy Increase for Hennepin County. If there is hope that there will be funds available for us to do our jobs and for us to have a reasonable raise, the County Board has to set a **RESPONSIBLE** Maximum Property Tax Levy. More information will be forthcoming from the Hennepin Action Team.

Local 2822 Officers

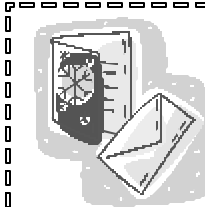
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Co-chief Steward	
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Vacant	
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Good & Welfare	
Heather Clark	952-847-8523
<i>hclark@hclib.org</i>	

Bulletin Board

The New Voice deadline is August 9. Articles will be accepted up to and including the day of the monthly Membership Meeting for inclusion in the following month's newsletter. Send your written contributions to Molly Malecki or Lynn Stetler.

Visit Local 2822 Website

<http://www.afscme2822.org>



Help us remember your co-workers with a card. Let us know to send a sympathy card, get well or congratulations. We will send a card, hand-made by E-board member Lynn Stetler.

Contact Heather Clark, our Good and Welfare Coordinator at 952-847-8523 or by e-mail: hclark@hclib.org. The request should include the name of the member, the reason for the request and home address, if possible."

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Mary Dwyer	612-596-7894	HSD	Health Services Building
Jody Goers	612-596-8080	Sheriff	Jail
Walter Hanson	763-569-3683	Service Center	Brookdale Service Center
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Lynn Stetler	952-847-8569	Library	Ridgedale Library/CTS, Collection Management
Jessica Trujillo	612-348-6001	HSD	Health Services Building
Bridget Walker	612-596-8080	Sheriff	Jail

New to Hennepin County?

If you haven't been approached by a union representative yet, please fill out this form and send to our membership secretary.

To sign up as a full union member or for Delta Dental Insurance, or to get answers to questions about AFSCME and membership benefits, please fill out this coupon and send to:

Bridgette Walker
Jail, Mail Code 905

Name _____

Job Title _____

Work Location _____

Mailcode _____

Phone _____

I'm especially interested in:

I want to sign up as a full member.