



On The Move

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SEPTA Wants to Make a Trade over Pension Reform

Negotiations are underway for the 2016 contract and SEPTA has come to the realization that pension reform is the key to getting a new contract done by the October 31, 2016 deadline. As a result, SEPTA wants to talk about trading other contract benefits for pension reform, something the Union is not going to do, especially given the huge differences that still exist between the union and management pension plans.

Unfairness still exists between the union and management pension plans

During a recent bargaining session, SEPTA conceded that they modified management's pension plan as a result of the Union's success in winning political and public support for closing the gap between the two plans. In an effort to diminish the power of the Union's message, the SEPTA Board revised the pension for management and administrative personnel. As a result, 1,800 non-union workers were required to contribute 2.5% starting in December, 2015 and 3.5% starting in December 2016, to match the 3.5% paid by members of Local 234. Previously, managers paid only 0.9% of their paychecks toward the pension fund.

The increased pension contributions from management will save SEPTA \$163 million over time. That's money that can go towards wages, benefits and pension improvements for the entire workforce. So there is no reason to accept cost saving *benefit reductions* to pay for pension reform, an issue SEPTA is pushing at the bargaining table---that's SEPTA's idea for a trade.

However, the changes made to the management plan failed to address the **main source of inequality** between the two--the \$50,000 cap used to calculate our monthly pension benefits. There is still no such cap in the management plan. Managers receive retirement benefits based on their annual salaries, even if their salaries are well in excess of \$50,000 a year, which is the case for virtually all participants in the management plan. When confronted with this fact in negotiations, SEPTA had no answer whatsoever.

What does this all mean?

It is now clear as day that the changes the Authority made to management's pension plan signified that top SEPTA management had come to the conclusion that TWU members would no longer tolerate the inequities between the two plans. SEPTA also concluded that the membership is prepared to fight for fair treatment. As a result, if we remain unified, determined and ready to fight for pension justice, the Local will have real leverage at the bargaining table in 2016.

For Local 234, Non-Economic Issues Must Take Center Stage

“Throw the book at them.” That’s the philosophy of many SEPTA managers. As a result, it is not uncommon to see minor violations blown all out of proportion with the addition of a long list of “rule violations” and multiple disciplinary charges based on a single event.

Take the operator who has a chargeable accident for example. A chargeable accident only warrants a written warning. Yet, when the notice of investigation is issued, the operator is charged with a slew of rule violations, along with the chargeable accident---BDR this, BDR that. Even though the Local is able to protect the jobs of many members who get caught in SEPTA’s web, our people have to endure a whole lot of stress in the meantime.

So what’s the point of all this? All it shows is the disrespect some managers’ have toward the employees who work for them. It also shows some managers trying to advance themselves by flexing their “SEPTA muscles” at the expense of our members and their families.

Quality of work life and undue stress are important issues. That’s why they are among the many non-economic issues being addressed in these contract negotiations.

Here are some other non-economic issues on the table.

- ▶ Time studies to set production standards must be conducted using a *cross-section* of at least three employees in the affected job classification.
- ▶ Prevent SEPTA from using video cameras, or its new GPS system in maintenance vehicles, to conduct real-time *surveillance* of employees.
- ▶ Protect and create jobs for all cashiers affected by the new fare collection technology.
- ▶ Allow slate operators to pick a.m. or p.m. work assignments made by the Authority.
- ▶ Apply progressive discipline to chargeable accidents involving pedestrian contact, except in cases of reckless driving that causes serious bodily injury.
- ▶ Notification of the employee’s district will be sufficient when taking approved intermittent FMLA leave---eliminate AmeriHealth from the mix.
- ▶ No AWOLs for employees who call-in, but can’t get to work due to a severe weather emergency.
- ▶ Do away with the agreement that limits the Union’s right to use on-board video recordings to expose, capture, and prosecute the assailants of bus and trolley operators.
- ▶ No video cameras in facilities customarily used by employees to congregate when they are off the clock; such as trainperson rooms, lunch rooms, rest rooms, quiet rooms, etc.

We Must and We Will