



On The Move

9-12-16

Official Publication of TWU Local 234

www.twulocal234.net

Management Gives Itself Pension Increase and Bigger Contributions to their Pension Fund

As the old saying goes, you learn something new every day. This is especially true when you're involved in contract negotiations with SEPTA.

After the 2014 negotiations, SEPTA modified management's pension, the "SAM" Plan, as a result of the Union's insistence that the gap between the TWU Plan and the SAM Plan be closed. SEPTA revised the SAM Plan by increasing managers' contributions to the SAM Fund. Starting in November, 2016, managers will pay 3.5%, the same percentage paid by Local 234 members.

However, other changes made to the SAM Plan exposed SEPTA's hypocrisy and bias against union employees. Members of TWU, Local 290---supervisors, dispatchers and clerks took a big hit. They can no longer count overtime pay in calculating their pension benefits. At the same time, the *higher paid managers received a big increase in their pension*, because the Authority increased the multiplier used to calculate monthly pension benefits, leading to substantially higher pensions for the highest paid managers in the SAM Plan. This increase in management's benefits *aggravated the inequity* that Local 234 has been talking about for the past two years and there is still no earnings CAP in the SAM Plan.

Adding insult to injury, SEPTA's annual payments to the SAM Fund and the TWU Fund are way out of whack. SEPTA pays the SAM Fund 25% of the annual earnings of each participant in the SAM Plan. With the average salary for SAM employees at \$125,000, SEPTA pays \$31,250 into the SAM Fund for each manager. In contrast, SEPTA pays the TWU Fund only 16% of the earnings of each employee in the TWU Plan, or \$10,400 per member, based on average annual earnings of \$65,000---another gross inequity between the union and management plans.

This proves that management is willing to spend large sums to support their own pension benefits, while shortchanging our pension benefits and our pension fund. The time has come to fix these problems in contract negotiations. If we remain unified, determined and ready to fight for pension justice, we can succeed at the bargaining table in 2016.

Cashier job security is a top priority in contract negotiations

One of the Local's top priorities in contract negotiations is the job security of our cashiers and others who need work in an alternate duty position due to medical necessity. For the cashiers,

the problem will become real once SEPTA introduces its new fare collection technology. As often happens, machines are replacing people. While we can't stop the use of modern technology, we must protect the jobs of the employees who are affected and we intend to do just that.

A little history is required to understand the issue. The threat of automation has been out there for a long time and we already have an agreement with SEPTA to protect the careers of cashiers displaced by the new fare collection equipment. The agreement provides the following protections: (1) no cashier will be forced out of SEPTA as a result of automation, (2) a new job and job description will be created for all current cashiers, and (3) the cashiers will maintain their wage rates in the new job(s), along with all of their rights under the contract.

The issues that must be addressed in negotiations include the job description for the new "customer service" position and the total number of alternate duty positions that will be available to TWU members disqualified from their regular job due to medical necessity.

Union to Arbitrate SEPTA's Merger of Commuter Rail "Trippers" into Regular Runs at Midvale, Allegheny, Southern and Comly Depots

In order to deal with the loss of suburban commuter rail service, SEPTA came up with the bright idea of setting up 49 illegal runs at four transportation locations. The runs combined regular City Division work with regional rail, shuttle work. This way, management thought they could avoid paying overtime for shuttle work that should have been classed as trippers and paid as such. On August 30, 2016, before the work even started, the Union filed a grievance and we will arbitrate the matter if necessary. In addition, the grievance covers the Authority's failure to obtain the consent of the Union to run regional rail work out of the City Transit Division, such work is not our regular work under the contract. These issues will be addressed in arbitration.

SEPTA Demands Big Cost Increases for Health Benefits

SEPTA is making a number of outrageous demands at the bargaining table. For example, SEPTA wants us to pay 1% of a forty hour week **plus \$352.19 per month** to keep our current family medical plan. SEPTA calls this a "Buy-Up Plan." For single coverage, SEPTA wants you to pay the 1% **plus \$157.01 per month**. SEPTA has many other cost savings demands on the table. As you can see, we are dealing with SEPTA negotiators who are out of their minds!

Big Local 234 Turnout on Labor Day

Local 234 members turned out in large numbers for the Labor Day parade last Monday. It was one of our biggest turnouts in years, demonstrating that the members realize the importance of rank and file activism in the high stakes 2016 contract negotiations. We will work for an even bigger turnout next year in the ongoing fight for respect and dignity on the job.

WE MUST AND WE WILL!