

## NOVEMBER 2005 MEA NEWSLETTER

It is a little bit early, but after the ballots are counted the holiday season begins. Shopping and other tasks can add to stress, but in the end we have the opportunity to spend time with family, friends, and loved ones. May your Holidays bring happiness and peace.

**Housing Authority Members need help** - The biggest challenge/crisis facing MEA today involves the difficulty our members are having in negotiating a fair successor contract with the San Francisco Housing Authority (SFHA). MEA's SFHA bargaining unit negotiated its first contract in 2001. That contract in part stated:

“The parties recognize that in recent years MEA represented classes have not received compensation adjustments equivalent to those received by other non-craft classifications. Therefore, effective October 1, 2002 and for the duration of this MOU, the classifications covered under this MOU shall receive the same “total compensation” percentage increase, exclusive of any “special adjustments” afforded to non-craft represented classifications”.

In 2003, both SEIU and MEA negotiated a 10.5% compensation increase as provided under the reopener language of that contract. Both groups agreed to salary increases of 3.5%. SEIU agreed to a schedule by which the 7% employee contribution to PERS would be assumed by the SFHA. MEA agreed to an identical schedule in which the employer would pay the 7% to a 401 (a) plan.

In the current round of negotiations the SFHA has agreed with everyone to provide a 6% salary increase similar to the contracts negotiated by City Unions. The SFHA proposal to MEA also includes the takeaway of the 7% contribution to the 401(a). (Get 6% eventually, lose 7% now) The Authority is intent on economically penalizing only the management bargaining unit. The SFHA's proposal has been unanimously rejected by the membership. MEA has filed Unfair Labor Practice Charges.

We may be in for a long battle, but MEA is determined to bargain a fair contract and not be the only target for takeaways. All members may be asked to support our efforts.

**Politics** – This newsletter is being written before the election results are known. Regardless of the results, California's Public Employees and their Unions will confront growing attempts to curtail your compensation and ability to influence your employers. Last month we spoke about the GASB requirement that, most believe will require public employers to begin setting aside real dollars to fund the cost of medical benefits that are guaranteed to active employees and retirees particularly for retiree medical costs. Pension costs are also expected to increase. The public wants more services. The Federal Government is under-funding the States for mandates imposed by the administration (think about how much California pays or will pay for “no child left behind” and the “bird flu” vaccine. At the same time there is no interest in significantly increasing revenues. You can expect the next challenge to be a State ballot measure to limit all the benefits provided by California's public employee pension plans.

**MEA EVENTS** – **The Night at the Ball Park** a benefit for Leadership San Francisco proved a great time for those who attended. Not only were the Long Island Ice Teas appreciated but the opportunity to try and hit from the same batters box used by Alou, Bonds, Snow, Visquel etc. was a thrill. To stand in the outfield and think how good hitters must be to drive a ball provides a unique opportunity to appreciate the American Pastime. Thanks to those who attended.

**Mayor Gavin Newsom will attend an MEA Dinner Meeting on January 11, 2006. There will be an opportunity for questions and answers. We hope to receive insights about contract negotiations and his immediate and longer-term hopes for our City. Mark your calendars and make every effort to attend. Details in the December Newsletter.**

Last month MEA's Board announced the intent to match up to \$12,500 in member contributions for a donation to **Habitat For Humanity** and that organization's efforts to assist in the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast in the aftermath of **Katrina**. To date we have received about 10 contributions. Members in the City Unit will receive the second of this year's 2% salary increases effective November 5, 2005. Court employees will receive a 3.5% increase effective December 1, 2005. **Please consider donating some or all of the first pay period's increase to this noble effort. We know that many members have made their own contribution, but consider doubling your effort through the MEA plan. Checks should be made out to Habitat for Humanity and mailed to MEA's office at 870 Market Street, Suite 460, San Francisco 94102.**

**City Employed Members** – At the end of the month you will receive in a separate mailing a questionnaire seeking your thoughts regarding negotiations. This will be the principal source of information to determine the Board's strategy and priorities for this round of negotiations. Demographic information is requested particularly to guide us in thinking about retirement improvements. Note: it is unlikely that any retirement measure will appear before 11/06, as many unions want to see the 7.5% retirement contribution assumed again by the City before considering a ballot measure. With retirement costs increasing, it may not be possible to craft a measure acceptable to labor then, but we need to think of MEA's interests based on the "reality" of our membership, so please provide the information.

Also, negotiating movement and higher salaries in M CCP ranges A, B and C will provide the greatest economic improvement for many members. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with the 2005-06 M CCP salary rates which are available at: [www.sfgov.org/site/uploadedfiles/dhr/compmanual/CompManual.pdf](http://www.sfgov.org/site/uploadedfiles/dhr/compmanual/CompManual.pdf)

**NEW MEMBERS:** COURTS - Shannon Martin, Marie Gonzalez, Gia Espinocilla, Nicole Adams, Anthony Gavero, Angelique Andreozzi, Claire Williams PUBLIC WORKS - Paul Ito, Sreedharan Pisharath, Richard Bridygham MTA/MUNI - Mary Donovan, Marisa Espinosa AIRPORT - Elaine Forbes PUBLIC HEALTH - Fely Alminiana, Yuki Kubo-Hendricks ASIAN ART MUSEUM - Kinceston Moore PUC – John Powell

**RETIREES:** Rick Ruvolo – Environment, Nancy Woo – City Administrator, Chris Perlee – Hetch Hetchy

**TELECOMMUTING** - The attached letter from SFDHR Director Phil Ginsburg refers to a program that may allow you to avoid Bay Area traffic by working from home occasionally. Many workers find that more can be accomplished at home, in informal attire with fewer interruptions, than at the office. Take a look at the entire program and guidelines at [www.sfgov.org/DHR](http://www.sfgov.org/DHR) You might be required to manage this program for other city workers.

**A RANDOM THOUGHT** - We baby boomers and older Americans were urged to ask not what our country could do for us, but instead what we could do for our country. Many MEA members chose public service for their career, at least partially, in response to that challenge.

But collectively we ask for services to meet our expectations but are reluctant to pay for them. For the first time in our history we are fighting a war and, at the same time, lowering taxes. We will leave it to our descendents to pay much of the cost, and hope cutting Medicare and Medical for the poorer amongst us will pay the rest.

In that vein it was interesting to note that the FEMA contracts for attaching the ubiquitous blue plastic sheets that cover damaged property were awarded on a non-competitive bid basis. The contractors are reported to receiving triple the usual rate for such work. At the same time the prevailing \$9 an hour for such work has been suspended and those doing the work are receiving a straight time rate of \$6 an hour. So the work costs more, the workers get less – who do you think gets the money?