

## MARCH 2006 MEA NEWSLETTER

**OPEN ENROLLMENT UPDATE** – The San Francisco Health Service System has announced that open enrollment will be from April 3 – April 28, 2006. Enrollers will be available from 9 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday. Call Employee Benefit Specialists at 800 229-7683 for an appointment.

MEA represented City and Court employees are eligible to use their flexible benefit dollars (cafeteria plan) for dependent medical premiums and other purposes. If you wish to continue using your flex dollars solely for dependent medical premiums, you may not have to schedule an appointment. However, if you use the dollars for any other existing, additional or alternative purpose, you must arrange an appointment. Cost changes, coverage changes, and “wet signature” requirements mandate appointments.

Every year a small number of members run into problems because they did not make or keep an appointment. Sometimes that means not being allowed to continue coverage they had and want. Sometimes it means a physical exam or other inconvenience in order to continue current coverages. Please remember to call EBS to cancel, postpone, or reschedule your appointment. Inevitably there is another MEA member who would like to schedule their meeting in the time slot you vacate.

MEA works hard to negotiate the best possible compensation package for members. Every year some members don't use all of the flexible dollars they are entitled to. Please take full advantage of this benefit. Regardless of your situation, when you receive your open enrollment packet, call EBS and arrange your appointment.

**NEGOTIATIONS – HOUSING AUTHORITY** After months of painful negotiations that included the Housing Authority Commission refusing the Executive Director's request to unilaterally extend the MEA contract, a tentative agreement was ratified by MEA members. The agreement acknowledges the termination of the employer contribution to a 401 A plan, and replaces it with employee options (under certain circumstances) to cash out as much as five weeks of sick leave and Management Time Off.

Difficult negotiations require members to stand up and be counted. In that light special thanks should be given to Gayle Hudson, Gerald Leroy, George Linn, Nicole McCray-Dickerson, and Alicia Sisca, who, at different times, served on the bargaining committee.

While this agreement was not all we had hoped for, it was agreed to (in large part) as it became more obvious that the Federal Government would most likely impose budget reductions in excess of the 11% plus cut confronted in FY 05-06. All of the Authority's Union contracts are scheduled to expire September 30 and another difficult bargaining season is to be expected.

**CITY NEGOTIATIONS** – Your bargaining team, Eileen Hirst MEA President, Jean Mariani and Cheryl Austin MEA Board of Directors, Matt Smyth DPW, and Gary Franzella SFIA has met with the City's Negotiators four times. Initial proposals have been exchanged. If a tentative agreement is to be reached, it should be by approximately May first. The City has acknowledged its obligation to resume payment of the 7.5% employee retirement contribution effective July 1. The City is also prepared to, with the Unions' agreement, provide a salary increase in lieu of the retirement contribution in addition to COLAS. Progress has also been made on some of the smaller issues (parking, parental leave, severance). We wait for the City's response to the MEA proposal to implement MCCP

providing increases within ranges A and B based on time at current salary step, and mutually agreeable performance measures. Responses are expected within two weeks.

The City has proposed to all City Unions to end the Wellness Pilot Program, a City proposal agreed to in 2002. You may recall that the Wellness Program provides that retiring employees would receive up to 1040 hours of accrued unused sick leave in cash. Sick leave earned before 1976 is vested and all owed to the employee on retirement. New sick leave could be cashed out at 2.5% per year of service. The City proposal was designed to provide a savings to the City that they say hasn't happened. Proposition F (3+3) accelerated the retirement of senior employees who had lots of sick leave on the books. Therefore, more than expected was paid out under the Wellness Program. We have not agreed to this takeaway. However it's hard to think that an arbiter will agree to extend a "pilot program" that didn't achieve its goal. Along with other Unions, we look to find an agreeable alternative.

### **MEA BOARD VACANCIES, APPOINTMENTS, AND ELECTION** **Change is the only constant.**

Carol Sam, MEA's longest serving Board member retired from City service. We wish her many years of happiness in all her future endeavors. Theresa Lee, Deputy Director SFIA resigned her Board position to hopefully find more time to spend with her expanded family. Family demands also led Maggie Donahue, Director of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs DHS to resign her seat on the Board. Pat Hammersmith left the Board when she took a position in another County.

Pursuant to Section V (g) of the ByLaws, Rafael Centano, SFIA; Sharon Saslafsky, PUC; Matt Smyth, DPW; and Bob Thomas DPH/Laguna Honda were appointed to, and accepted positions on the Board.

The next election of Officers and Board members will take place during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of FY 06-07.

### **NEW MEMBERS**

Gil Montoya, MTA; Margarita Rodriguez, Tax Collector; Susana Martinez, City Attorney; Steve Gelman, Medical Examiner; Jeffrey Airth, SFIA; Nancie Parker, SFIA.

### **RETIRED**

Allison Moed, DPH; Margaret Layne, PUC; Ladonis Elston, DPH

We rely on Payroll/DTIS information to know who's new and who's gone. When you see a new manager, call MEA at 989-7244, we'll prepare a Welcome Aboard/Membership packet addressed to that person and mail it to them.