



MEA NEWSLETTER - January 2008

In this issue...

MEA Networking Social – March 3, 2008 - Jillian's
From the Executive Director: New Years' Resolution
Management Training
Important Notice: LTD and CIP
Commuter Benefit
Staffing Changes at MEA
Update Contact Info with MEA

MEA Networking Social (and 3rd Quarter General Membership Meeting) at Jillian's

When: Monday, March 3, 2008 at 6:00pm

Where: Jillian's @ Metreon, 101 Fourth Street

Agenda: Great Food, Pool, Drinks and business if events necessitate (e.g. pension update)

Please join us for this exciting social evening to reconnect with old friends, make new acquaintances and “disintermediate” the winter blues. RSVP to staff@sfmea.com.

From the Executive Director: I have a New Years' Resolution – to spend 2008 touting the value of public service and the commitment and integrity of those individuals who dedicate their careers to it. I ask all the elected and appointed officials in San Francisco to join me in this task. To do otherwise is to stand with the proponents of small government and unfettered market forces in their quest to undermine the social compact between the public and its institutions. This is not only dangerous but a repudiation of our shared values and our urgent mission.

Late last year, when I read the initial SF Chronicle article about the City's potential budget shortfall I was struck, once again, by the negative tone - most notably in the reference to “trimming the fat” and slashing jobs. When statements are made that feed into public perception of public employees as overpaid, under-worked bureaucrats, it cannot help but result in further erosion in confidence and increase in cynicism. That drum beat - that government just doesn't work – always comes back to haunt us when we seek support for critical public policy initiatives such as rebuilding General Hospital. The reality of ongoing efforts in the City to build consensus around shared challenges (e.g. GASB, MTA) is replaced by a message that elected leaders and public employees aren't part of the same team with the same goals.

This pattern is deeply troubling to MEA and the managers it represents. Although it takes longer and is more complex, it is imperative that we conduct an honest dialogue about mounting challenges in a world of diminishing resources, and the difficult decisions necessary to face them. To pretend “doing more with less” is a strategic option is disingenuous at best since we all know that what gets done with less is almost always less. This is especially true when the people who are expected to do more with less – managing the City and its programs - are diminished and disrespected. It just seems to me that there has to be a better way for us to support each other and the City. On behalf of MEA, I pledge to work towards seeking that better way.

Management Training: Did you know you can use MEA management training dollars for **Executive Coaching?** Please contact the office if you are interested in more information on this important, career enhancing benefit.

Equipment Fund: As of December 31, 2007 we are no longer processing applications for the MEA Equipment Program through the Management Training Fund. As reported in earlier newsletters, the program was possible because of the surplus that had built up in the Management Training Fund. In July, it was determined that we would institute the program for six months and then pause to assess both the success and economics at the end of the year. That analysis will now take place and be reported back out to the membership. In the meantime, if you have an “approval to buy” issued in response to an application filed prior to the end of the year, you can go ahead and make your purchase and subsequent request for reimbursement.

Tax Note: MEA has confirmed that reimbursements paid out of the Management Training Fund – including the Equipment Program - are not reported by the City as taxable income. As always, you should confirm this with your own accountant or tax preparer.

IMS: Check the MEA website <http://www.sfmea.com/> for the complete 2008 IMS Schedule.

Important Notice: LTD and CIP: If you elect to purchase Long Term Disability (LTD) insurance under the Cafeteria Plan you may be ruled ineligible for the Catastrophic Illness Plan (CIP) under guidelines now being enforced by the City. It is extremely important that you carefully consider your options when choosing benefits under the Cafeteria Plan and make an informed decision. Please contact the MEA office for additional information.

Commuter Benefit: Save Up to 40% on Commute Costs with Commuter Benefits

If you receive a paycheck from the City and County of San Francisco, you can save up to 40% or more on transit and vanpool expenses through the Commuter Benefits Program! Here’s how this program works. You can deduct up to \$115 per month from your paycheck, pre-tax, to pay for public transit tickets and vanpool fare. Deduct any additional amounts needed, post-tax, to cover the full cost of your tickets. Another \$220 per month, pre-tax, may be used to pay for parking at BART and Caltrain stations. Using pre-tax dollars to purchase passes means you experience a savings.

You simply select your passes and the amount is automatically deducted from your paycheck. Your passes are delivered to your home address before the first of each month. The program can be used for Muni, BART, AC Transit, SamTrans, Golden Gate Transit, Caltrain, ferries or any other transit service in the Bay Area, as well as vanpools. Employees can change their deductions amounts from month to month, as needed. New employees will be able to enroll after they receive their first standard paycheck. Enrolling is easy and paperless. The deadline to enroll is the 10th of each month. Processing for this benefit can take up to 2 months so act now!

To sign up, go to www.myfbmc.com, where your SSN is your username and the last 4 digits of your SSN is your pin, or call FBMC’s Customer Service at 1-800-342-8017. For more information, call the Commuter Benefits Information Line at (415) 355-3727 or email commuterbenefits@sfgov.org

Staffing Changes at MEA: MEA Deputy Director Bob Boileau is no longer with the union effective January 4, 2008. We thank Bob for his service and dedication to MEA and its members over the years.

Update Contact Info with MEA: We can’t reach you if we can’t find you. Please update your contact information – home address, personal email and phone number – regularly. You can email it to staff@sfmea.com with the subject line reading CONTACT INFO UPDATE.

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