

# talk... **table** talk... table

AFSCME Council 5 Locals 34, 552, 1719, 2822, 2864, 2938

November 3, 2011

## Hennepin Sits on \$106 Million in Reserves -- We Say County Can Afford 3.8% Pay Raise

At the bargaining table Oct. 24, the Union team:

- Made our first wage proposal
- Persuaded the Employer to negotiate health plan design at the bargaining table
- Received a revised insurance proposal

**Wages.** Union negotiators pointed out that Hennepin County has over \$106,000,000 in reserves. This represents 17 percent of total operating expenditures for the year, which meets recommended levels.

A report from AFSCME International says: "Despite the national recession and questionable recovery, along with reductions in state and federal resources, the financial health of Hennepin County remains sound. This conclusion is based on health reserves in both the general fund and human services fund, despite recent drawdowns, and recently reaffirmed highest possible bond rating."

After that, we shared inflation data. For the one year from September 2010 to September 2011, inflation was 3.9 percent. For the past two years, it is over 5 percent. We pointed out that employees of Hennepin County have not received a pay increase going on 3 years.

We then proposed increasing all wages by 3.8 percent for both years of the Contract.

**Health insurance.** The Employer told us "what a good value employees are receiving from the health insurance, especially the employees taking single coverage." The Union pointed out the Employer's offer on health insurance was similar to what Wal-Mart gives its employees. Later, the Employer changed its proposal for individual employee health insurance.



**More than 400 members and supporters raised the roof at the Government Center Oct. 24. See the back page for information on future actions.**

Employees now pay premiums of \$32.50 a month. That increases to \$40 in December. The Employer wants to increase that even more, so we pay \$60 for single coverage in 2012 and \$80 a month for single coverage in 2013.

The latest proposal does scale back the Employer's earlier attempt to raise monthly premiums for individuals to \$173.84. Now, the Employer wants us to pay "only" twice as much.

**Health plan.** On Oct. 25, the Employer agreed to our demand to negotiate health care plan design at the bargaining table, not at the Labor Management Committee Health Care committee. Among our issues with the plan design:

- We need to change which tiers various providers are in. Specifically, we believe HealthPartners needs to be in Tier One and Park Nicollet in Tier Two.
- We oppose starting a first-dollar deductible.

# What's Next ...

A mediator joins our next **negotiating** session on Nov. 7. We also negotiate on Nov. 14.

If we continue the action we have been doing and make all the preparations we can, we hope to have a settlement at that time that we can all agree with. If that happens, there will be open enrollment for health care beginning on Nov. 17.

The current contract expires Dec. 31.

## Member survival kit now available

This is also known as the **Strike Manual**. If you haven't seen some in your work area, contact your Local President and have some sent to you. In case we weren't heard on the 24<sup>th</sup> floor, and in case the County doesn't make a reasonable offer, and in

case our members are unwilling to settle for an unacceptable contract and instead **vote to strike**, we will be ready. The manual has tips on what happens with insurance, on getting personal finances ready, and explains how a strike works.

## Action / Strike Preparation Team

Our first **strike training** takes place Nov. 21, 5:30-7 p.m. at the United Labor Center, 312 Central Ave. NE, Minneapolis. We need all members to get training, which includes how to stage a successful strike if we need one, how to deal with fears about going on strike, and effective strike logistics.

There will be more work ahead. To **help out**, contact Katie Farber at [kaf1955@comcast.net](mailto:kaf1955@comcast.net).

# Who Does the Work? We Do!

The Union Negotiations Team was immensely moved and inspired by the noontime rally on Oct. 24. Over 400 members and supporters raised the roof on the Government Center. Our voices were surely heard on the 24<sup>th</sup> floor.

The Table Team was energized when we went into negotiations at 2:30 p.m., knowing that we are not alone.

The main messages of the rally were that we cannot continue to do more with less; that we are



the front line, not the bottom line; that we do the work of the County and deserve to be compensated fairly; and that HENNEPIN COUNTY WORKS BECAUSE WE DO.

A big "thank you" to Katie Farber and the Action Team for organizing this successful rally.

**To see more photos of the rally:** Go to Facebook -- Hennepin AFSCME Action --

and "like" it. Also, Local 34's website ([www.afscmelocal34.org](http://www.afscmelocal34.org)) has additional photos.

If you have questions about contract negotiations, please contact your AFSCME leaders:

- ❖ **Local 34** – Social and Health Services – President: Jean Diederich
- ❖ **Local 552** – Probation and Parole Officers – President: Pat Guernsey
- ❖ **Local 1719** – Adult Corrections Officers – President: Dale Blom
- ❖ **Local 2822** – Clerical and Related Services – President: Lynn Stetler
- ❖ **Local 2864** – Professional and Librarians – President: Caron Chapman
- ❖ **Local 2938** – Legal and Essential Units – President: Kellie Charles

*AFSCME Field Representatives* – Matt Nelson, Jeff Dains, Mark Baker