

MINUTES OF THE WASHTECH PLANNING COUNCIL (PC)  
February 10, 2009, 6:30 PM

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**Call to Order**

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The meeting was called to order by Rick Saling, Executive Vice President. Also present were Les French, Jim Burdick, Brian Roberts, Curt Eidem, Mitch McMurry, Bill Montgomery, Anna Bloomquist, and Rennie Sawade.

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**Reading of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

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The minutes of 1/13/09 were read and approved.

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**President's Report (Les French)**

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Les reported that a critical need had developed to upgrade the staff bookkeeping skills: payroll taxes and other federally required items were not being paid. He and Treasurer Mitch McMurry, with the assent of the Executive Council, hired Marsha LeRoy to do our bookkeeping, working about 10 hours per month. Marsha also does the books for Local 82 of The Newspaper Guild. This change made one staff member superfluous, who will be laid off and given severance pay. Mitch commented that the change will save us considerable expense.

Les reported on the officer training in late January. Three major areas needing attention came out of the training: (1) our officers need to be oriented to their duties and responsibilities; (2) our bylaws need a complete rewrite; and (3) we need to compile a local Uniform Operating Procedures Manual (UOPM) to include rules and procedures, such as per diem payments, that are not covered in CWA International's UOPM.

Our AT&T Mobility CBU contract expired at midnight, with negotiations for a new contract currently at a hiatus. For now our people will work without a contract, and Les presented an information sheet we have prepared to answer workers' questions. During this noncontract period, wages and benefits are frozen, and management is not allowed to make any material changes in working conditions. New grievances may be processed, but arbitration will not occur except for grievances already in process when the contract ended. The company may quit collecting dues, which would require us to collect them ourselves. Les fears there may be a large increase in punishments, and the company may campaign actively to encourage employees to opt out of the union.

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**Finance Committee Report (Mitch McMurry, Treasurer)**

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Mitch said he will work with Marsha to prepare a report for next month.

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**Membership Committee Report**

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BJ Oriley, chair of this committee, has opted out of the union, and thus there was no report. A new chair is being sought.

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**Communications Committee Report (Rennie Sawade, Member and Acting Chair)**

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Rennie reported that our staff reporter, Priyanka Joshi, has been doing video interviews. Rennie also created a video and posted it on YouTube to get community feedback.

We now have a blog. Rennie said that our founder Marcus Courtney told him we are the first union in the CWA to have a blog. It is a forum to which any union member can post. "Strike Updates" is one important category of information.

Bill Montgomery questioned whether the blog may be counterproductive since anyone can post any opinion. He wondered whether we can edit out disagreeable opinions. Rennie replied that some of our best defenders are posting to the blog but that we can and do delete offensive feedback. There was discussion of which is better, a blog (which is authored) or a forum (which is not). Bill proposed we run with the blog now and see how it works, and maybe later change to a forum.

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**Technology Committee Report (Rennie Sawade, Chair)**

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Rennie discussed our box trapper, an antispam device, which has blocked some valid e-mails. Rennie released these and showed staffer Dan Gillespie how to do this from now on.

Bill said he had a concern that Les's laptop has no access to wi-fi. Les replied that Rennie is working on this problem.

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**Legislative Committee Report (Curt Eidem, Chair)**

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Curt said labor's primary emphasis in Olympia now is the Workers Privacy Act; the State Labor Council has asked for a concerted effort to call people to drum up support. We need to call our state representatives and senators. Later, about June, emphasis will shift to the Employee Free Choice Act.

Mitch asked about Curt's progress in getting members for the Legislative Committee. Curt replied that he has one person interested.

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**AT&T CBU Vice President's Report (Anna Bloomquist)**

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Anna said that someone posted on the blog that he had 150 signatures for decertification of AT&T Mobility. Les replied that decert requires first a petition signed by 30 percent of the members, then a majority vote of the workers in the CBU. About 70 to 80 have opted out of membership.

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**AT&T CBU Vice President's Report (Bill Montgomery)**

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Bill said he has removed BJ Oriley's photo from the stewards' photos on the bulletin boards after she opted out of the union. Mitch asked if anyone knew why she did so, and Curt replied that she said she'd rejoin when Les is no longer president. Bill said she was approaching people on his team and telling them how they could opt out.

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**AT&T CBU Vice President's Report (Jim Burdick)**

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Jim reported that, since our meetings with members on Saturday and Sunday, people are a little more comfortable with how the bargaining with AT&T is being done.

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## New Business

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A proposal was made for charter renewal. Jim explained that under CWA rules every change in a local's jurisdiction requires a change in the charter; and ours has not been changed since before we had CBUs. There are certain forms to be submitted, as listed on a handout Jim distributed. Les moved that Jim head a task force to research the preparation of a new charter and present it at the next meeting.

**Action:**

- The motion passed.

Jim asked why the money available from our Ford Foundation grant is not included as part of the Treasurer's report. Mitch replied that he would discuss that with Marsha.

Les reported that Priyanka asked for the title "Director of Communications" to enhance her credibility when dealing with other agencies. Les feels, however, that the title of director implies the authority level of a board of directors, which corresponds to the Planning Council. Thus, if anyone has the title of Director of Communications, it would be our Communications Committee chair.

The PC considered punishment of members who cross the picket line if there is a strike. There have been a number of inquiries about this, and some members have said they would do it. Mitch said there are no sanctions District or National would apply, so we are a paper tiger if we attempt to punish. Anna said it's important to have some consequences, and at the recent training we were told that a local can fine a strikebreaker up to 5 times the amount he/she earns by doing so. Curt quoted Art. 19 of the CWA Constitution, which allows a local to fine, suspend, or expel a strikebreaker. Rick suggested dealing with each case individually. Les said that Louise Caddell told him she knew of only one instance of anyone being fined, and that the usual punishment was community service. It was moved that we vote on whether to institute some kind of punishment.

**Action:**

- The vote was a tie, and thus the motion did not pass.

The PC then considered how to fill the vacant chairmanship of the Communications Committee. Curt suggested leaving it as is, with Rennie as acting chair. Mitch suggested that Rennie chair Communications and leave Technology open; and Rennie agreed that he thought that was best. Les moved that Rennie be made Communications chair, and Brian amended this to add the condition that Rennie resign as Technology chair.

**Action:**

- The motion passed. Rennie is now Communications chair, and the Technology chairmanship is open.

Marcus Courtney proposed that he write an op-ed piece for newspapers on the importance of a tech workers union and the EFCA, and have it released through Pyramid Communications, a public relations firm. It was moved that we authorize this and pay for it at a cap of \$1000. Mitch amended the motion to provide we pay for it out of the Ford Foundation grant, and that we review it first.

**Action:**

- The motion passed. Marcus Courtney is authorized to write an op-ed piece on the importance of a tech workers union and the EFCA, and the local will pay Pyramid Communications to distribute it, provided it costs no more than \$1000. Payment is to come from our Ford Foundation grant if that is feasible, but in any event it will not come from the general fund. Publication is subject to advance review and approval of the piece by the President of WashTech.

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**Good and Welfare of the Body**

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Les announced that he intends to make a Leadership Award this year, which we had done for some years but have not done lately. Nominations are open until the next PC meeting. Dan Gillespie and Mitch McMurry were nominated.

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**Adjournment**

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The meeting adjourned at 9:16 PM. The next meeting will be at 6:30 PM, Tuesday, March 10, 2009, at Suite 200, 2900 Eastlake Ave. E., Seattle, WA, unless otherwise notified.

Brian Roberts, Secretary