

## Local 347 Survey Summary Provides Outline of Worker Comments, Concerns

A memo sent to Mayor Hahn, the City councilmembers and City managers provided a preliminary summary of the results of a survey taken late last year by the SIEU Local 347, which represents many City workers.

"To follow up on the survey and update distributed to city workers, Local 347 is sending along a summary of the preliminary results of the survey of workers' thoughts about possible cuts, cost savings, means of generating increased revenue, and ideas to improve the services we provide to the people of Los Angeles," wrote Julie Butcher, head of Local 347.

"These submissions have not been edited," she continued. "The Union trusts that the leaders of LA want to hear from the workers without censoring. Some of these are great ideas. Some of these suggestions could not be supported by the Union institutionally. All of them reflect great thoughtfulness and a clear commitment to our work. It is inspiring to understand the depth of this commitment to the City of Los Angeles.

"SEIU Local 347 has identified several themes and proposals worthy of pursuit."

### The memo includes these comments and observations:

■ **City workers have amazing ideas about how their work could be done more efficiently and more cost effectively.** These ideas should be heard, explored, tried, and, above all, respected. No suggestion should be ignored.

■ **There are considerable problems with the way in which the City administers contracts for services.** Departments are not following the charter, complying with provisions of the collective bargaining agreement, and are not doing meaningful cost benefit analyses. In



many instances, department managers are contracting out work that could be done in-house more cost effectively and at a higher quality but because of obstacles to hiring staff, contracts are being let at a higher cost.

■ **Employees emphasize their expectations that their employer will "take care of business" in many different ways.** They expect the City to provide them with the proper tools, equipment, and supplies to do their jobs. For instance, workers in DOT consistently complain about the inadequacy of the operations responsible for posting and replacing street signs and for painting curbs. This valid complaint arises from the negative effect the

lack of these services have on the ability of other workers to do their jobs. City workers don't like to look stupid. Failing to paint red curbs red makes them feel as if the City is incompetent, incapable of taking care of this simple piece of business.

This expectation extends to staffing issues. Workers expect supervision. The comments submitted in this quick survey show that employees will accurately notice where there are too many supervisors and managers as opposed to workplaces that are appropriately staffed and supervised. Again, the insights of the men and women doing the work are stark. The City would do well to take heed to their observations.

■ **Throughout these responses, one notes an overriding sense of pride and a focus on excellence.**

In joint labor-management committees across LA, city employees have developed work standards, have actively participated in processes that dramatically improve the way we provide service, and have led in changing the bureaucratic and stodgy ways of the past. Workers are proud that there is nothing private contractors can do that city workers cannot do – better, more responsibly, more efficiently. This commitment to excellence and quality is palpable.

■ **Much of the discussion generated is in the area of increasing the generation of revenue,** capturing otherwise lost opportunities, contracting IN work, increasing and expanding services, and recouping funds to pay for the work in the most responsible ways possible. City employees are proud of their work and believe that the public will support modest, understandable increases in costs for the provision of excellent services provided these are accompanied by accountability and transparency.

■ **Most city workers hate rigidity, bureaucracy, and intransigence.** Many cringe when they hear someone say, "It's not my job." Somehow, we have to work to preserve the protections ensured by firm testing and classification structures while reducing a cultural reliance on the status quo.

■ **Workers want information.** Several suggestions center on increased information sharing, training on the city budget, explanations of everyday processes and practices, increased focus on being certain that we are doing our jobs in the most up-to-date, competent, effective way possible.

"As always, Local 347 shares the commitment of its members to furthering the work we must all do together to guarantee that the people of Los Angeles are getting the absolute biggest bang for their taxpayer bucks," the memo concludes. "The Union hopes that this preliminary information is helpful as we proceed along the very tough financial path of 2003 and 2004." ■

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**WHERE:** LA Convention Center, South Hall  
**DATE:** Saturday, February 14th, 2004  
 9 AM – 10 PM  
**PRICING:** Adults - \$15,  
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