

RALLY V. BANKRUPTCY-IMPOSED LAYOFFS, UNION-BUSTING IN DETROIT WATER, ALL CITY DEPTS. TUES. OCT. 13

Posted on [10/09/2015](#) by [Diane Bukowski](#)



Heroic WWTP workers walked out in wildcat strike Sept. 30, 2012 to stop what is happening now. Leaders of AFSCME Council 25 sabotaged the strike and now Detroit may lose the Water & Sewerage Department.

LOCAL 207 ORGANIZER

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Office Phone 313-965-1601 Cell: 313-995-5691 Fax: 313-965-1603 Email: afscme207@sbcglobal.net Website: afscme207.com

RALLY TO STOP LAYOFFS & DEMAND FAIR CONTRACTS! **OUTSIDE WATER BOARD BUILDING (735 RANDOLPH) – TUES. OCT. 13, 4:30 PM**

AFSCME 207 Union Meeting Thursday October 8, 4:30pm, 600 W. Lafayette – Small Studio (near back entrance)

In the last year, DWSD Director Sue McCormick has laid off approximately 100 workers. Now about **another 100 layoffs are scheduled for October 23 without regard to seniority**. These layoffs are intended to be permanent since management has renamed our titles so that we can never be recalled to “obsolete” titles. Meanwhile, this cynical scheme leaves **workers performing the same tasks that we performed before this so-called “optimization plan” and title changes, just with less workers**. This throws many laid off workers and families into crisis, puts increased workloads on those still working, and irresponsibly sets up the system for failures due to short staffing. **The only way to stop layoffs is to unite & fight**. Workers at DMC recently rejected their first contract offer for the first time in 34 years. Fiat Chrysler workers have rejected theirs and may be striking. It is time that workers square off against bad contracts and union busting.

For AFSCME 207 and some other unions, management has intentionally refused to bargain contracts in good faith since 2012. Other unions ratified contracts that allow management to simply change their contracts at whim. Management has either coerced unions to agree (or unilaterally imposed) a series of outrageous concessions on wages, benefits, seniority rights, and they’ve curtailed unions’ ability to represent their members. They have even taken the unprecedented step of **unilaterally reassigning workers to unions of management’s choosing!**

In addition to imposing harsh new disciplinary guidelines, management is now demanding that we agree to *even more* reductions of our vacation, sick time, funeral leave, etc. with their new Paid Time Off (PTO) scheme. At least for GLWA employees, they want to replace our already reduced Defined Benefit Pension plan with a *much worse* Defined Contribution plan. **For unions that have contracts**, management plans to impose the concessions after 45 days of useless “discussions.” **For unions without contracts**, such as Local 207, management wants to impose more concessions *without* any real negotiations.

Now Federal Judge Cox plans to order union affiliation and contract issues to be decided through mediation, or he will impose terms himself by January 1, 2016. This provides DWSD and GLWA workers, including AFSCME 207 members, an **opportunity to fight for better contracts**. This is also true for those currently recognized by management as represented by Operating Engineers #324, Teamsters #214, and the Building Trades Council,

All unions should demand **contracts that do not allow management to unilaterally rewrite that contract**. We should all unite in the demand for decent contracts at both DWSD and GLWA **regardless of how the union affiliation question is resolved** by federal mediation. We should all **unite NOW to conduct a sustained militant campaign to stop the layoffs and win decent contracts**, starting with **the rally against layoffs**.

ATTENTION AFSCME LOCAL 207 MEMBERS – UNION ELECTIONS

Union officer nominations: **Tuesday October 27, 4:30-5:30pm**, 600 W. Lafayette, Small Studio. Elections: **Wednesday November 11, 6am-6pm**, same place. Current President (Michael Mulholland) and Secretary-Treasurer (Lekita Thomas) are not running. AFSCME State Headquarters says anyone who has **paid dues to Local 207 continuously for the past year is eligible to run (it doesn’t matter what union management says you’re in)** (call 313-995-5691 for info).



Current Local 207 President Mike Mulholland, former Local VP Lekita Thomas (now transferred), part of Local 207's fighting leadership.



Long live the heroic spirit of AFSCME Local 207 President John Riehl! Local Pres. 2000-2012, WWTP worker 37 years, died too early at age 62.

DETROIT CITY WORKERS BEING RUN OUT OF JOBS IN EVERY DEPT. DUE TO BANKRUPTCY

By Diane Bukowski

Oct. 9, 2015

(Editor: photos taken of this event by VOD did not turn out, others are used.)



AFSCME Local 2799 Pres. Cherlyn Rupert (Facebook)

Active city workers told State Sen. Coleman A. Young (D-Detroit), City Council President Brenda Jones, and Livingston County Circuit Court Judge Michael Hatty about the devastating effects the bankruptcy continues to have on them, during a meeting called by AFSCME Local 2799 Pres. Cheryl Rupert Oct. 5 at the AFSCME Council 25 hall downtown.

Under terms of the bankruptcy, the state continues its oversight of City of Detroit finances for 20 years, through a “Financial Review Commission.”

Romona Jones, a 27-year city employee currently with the Finance Dept. Purchasing Division, said all workers there are being forced to reapply for their jobs after completing online applications and testing.

“A lot of employees find the applications very difficult to complete, and they are afraid that if they don’t pass, they will be set on the street,” Jones said.

Vance Russell, a principal accountant who has worked for the city for 30 years, said workers in his division are also being forced to reapply for their jobs, under terms of Orr’s Executive Order 41, “Establishing Centralized Financial Management Organizational Structure.” See [EM Order 41 Establishing Centralized Financial Management Organizational Structure](#).



Vance Russell/Facebook

“This is a bomb over our heads,” Russell said. “We have an existing union agreement, from 2014-2018, that delineates our positions and nowhere does it state we have to re-apply for our jobs. The city met with all city employees Jan. 8, going around the unions, and held a sledge hammer over them saying the same thing.”

Council President Brenda Jones said it was her understanding that all EM orders should have expired in Dec. 2014, upon Orr’s exit as emergency manager, and that she is researching the matter.

Mike Mulholland, Pres. of AFSCME Local 207, representing Detroit Water and Sewerage (DWSD) workers, told VOD last week that he expects 67 of his members to be laid off this week because the department changed their job titles and made them apply for the new jobs, which comprised the same work, then denied their applications.

DWSD director Sue McCormick recently said that the department has eliminated 41 percent of its workers. A large number of contractors are being hired. Jones said the DWSD contracts are not being brought before the City Council.



Contractors digging up water mains on East Jefferson for at least the last month.

For the past month, VOD has observed contractors on East Jefferson from Belle Isle to Erma Henderson Park digging up huge tracts of sidewalks and street-side land. A project worker said they are replacing water mains, work normally done by qualified DWSD employees. Contractor trucks included some from Springline Excavating, LLC, which has offices in Detroit, Livonia, and Smyrna, GA.

Former Local 207 Vice-President Lekita Thomas earlier told VOD that DWSD workers must frequently go behind the work of inexperienced contractors to re-do it. There definitely appeared to be shoddy workmanship on the current project, as seen by one hydrant among many that have spouted water for weeks after the work.



This hydrant, connected by tubing to an unknown underground line, has been spraying large amounts of water for weeks. Other hydrants on E. Jefferson have been observed doing the same.

Association of Detroit Engineers Pres. Shakil Ahmed recently emailed GLWA chair Robert Daddow as follows: “DWSD is laying off 11 experienced engineers even with professional licenses and in their place are bringing engineers with no experience and without professional licenses. We are very short in engineering staff and this action will upset the operation of DWSD.”

Daddow replied that he could do nothing about it because the GLWA has not yet taken control. DWSD director Sue McCormick recently said that the department has eliminated 41 percent of its workers.

Audrey Bellamy, President of the Senior Accountants, Analysts and Appraisers Association(SAAA), said the city has also told all DWSD workers that they are no longer Civil Service employees.

“I don’t believe that’s legal or that they have the capacity to tell our people that,” Bellamy said.



JOIN THE PETITION CAMPAIGN FOR A REFERENDUM VOTE ON THE CITY OF DETROIT CONTRACT WITH THE GREAT LAKES WATER AUTHORITY.

DWSD faces a takeover mandated under terms of the bankruptcy plan by the regional Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA), with a current deadline of Jan. 1, 2016. DAREA and other groups are circulating petitions under Public Act 233 of 1955 calling for Detroiters to hold a referendum vote on the contract, mandated by that Act. If successful, the contract would be revoked, according to language in the Act.



Flint residents earlier protested Flint's cut-off from DWSD, which has resulted in high levels of lead and other contaminants in their water.

The GLWA met July 8 and approved a plan to severely downsize the current DWSD system, workforce, facilities, and spending as it takes over.

One of the provisions was to eliminate the whole of Genesee County, not just Flint, from the system. Recent announcements that Flint will be hooking back up to DWSD since large levels of lead poisoning have resulted from Flint's jerry-rigged set-up apparently are going to throw a wrench into those plans.

Click on:

<http://voiceofdetroit.net/2015/07/10/regional-water-czars-plan-permanent-shut-offs-to-large-parts-of-detroit-while-increasing-rates/>

<http://voiceofdetroit.net/2015/09/19/alert-still14-weeks-to-stop-detroit-water-take-over-more-shut-offs-rate-hikes-lay-offs-pollution/>



AFSCME Local 2799 Pres. Delia Enright

Delia Enright, President of AFSCME Local 1023 representing 911 workers, said the City Clerk’s office no longer has minutes for the Civil Service Commission, which they had kept on file for decades until 2011. She said she finally tracked down copies of the minutes and made a startling discovery.

“Denise Starr, the new head of Human Resources, went to the Civil Service Commission in June and gave them a brief outline of some of the Civil Service rules she is going to change.”

According to the City Charter, the Human Resources Department operates under the direction of the Civil Service Commission, not vice versa. Civil Service actually predates union representation for public workers, having been established in most municipalities decades ago to stop corrupt hiring practices.

Phyllis McMillion, president of AFSCME Local 542, representing General Service and Recreation Department workers, said the city is refusing to notify the union as required of the contracting out of numerous union-represented positions, meaning the lay-offs of more city workers.

Catherine Phillips, staff representative for Michigan AFSCME Council 25, said the union has filed unfair labor practice charges on the matter. During bankruptcy proceedings, Council 25 withdrew its appeal to the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Rhodes’ eligibility ruling, and later agreed to terms of the bankruptcy plan of adjustment.



AFSCME Local 542 Pres. Phyllis McMillion speaks at rally to save Belle Isle from state takeover Sept. 22, 2012. Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr ordered takeover later.