



FOR PLANNING PURPOSES

CONTACT: Eric Bailey, ebailey@seiu73.org

Chicago Park District Workers Vote to Authorize Strike for a Fair Contract

Chicago, IL – Chicago Park District workers have voted overwhelmingly to go on strike for a fair contract.

SEIU Local 73 represents over 2,200 Park District workers and has been in contract negotiations for more than nine months, with little to no movement on the part of Park District management.

“In 2019, an overwhelming majority of our Park District members voted to strike. Five years later, our members have once again voted overwhelmingly to strike,” **said Dian Palmer, President of SEIU Local 73.** “In the last five years, we have seen a 30% decrease in the number of programs offered at Chicago Parks. Why have we seen this decline? The fact is low wages and inadequate benefits are driving the staffing crisis in our parks.”

After the press conference, workers marched into the lobby chanting, “What do we want? Contract! When do we want it? Now!” as the union delivered their petition to strike to the fifth floor calling on Mayor Brandon Johnson to intervene in negotiations and help settle the contract.

“CEO Rosa Escareno hasn't bothered to be a part of contract negotiations and now we're calling on Mayor Johnson to intervene and help settle this contract,” said Palmer.

Park District workers are demanding:

- Competitive Pay increases for all and rewarding longevity with pay increases
- \$20/hr. minimum start rate of pay
- More monthly (full-time) positions
- Insurance for all
- Fair and transparent promotions process

“Nearly two-thirds of Chicago Park District workers are part-time and receive no health insurance coverage,” **said Joann Baker, Landscaping Foreman of 19 years.** “We have nearly 500 vacant positions. Why? Because surviving on a little more than \$16 an hour is far from a living wage for an individual, let alone someone providing for their family. Many of my co-workers are forced to work multiple jobs to pay rent and put food on the table. It's not right!”

“Over the last five years, our Park District has closed a third of its programs because workers can get better paying jobs elsewhere than what management is willing to pay,” **said Sean Ortiz, Park Supervisor of 20 years.** “Other city workers have access to health insurance coverage. But not in the Park District. Other city workers make a living wage so they can afford to live in Chicago. But not in the Park District. It is time for Park District management to treat us with the dignity and respect we deserve.”

The next bargaining session is scheduled for Wednesday, March 27.

###

SEIU Local 73 represents more than 35,000 workers, primarily in public service and publicly funded positions in school districts, municipalities, social service agencies, and many other job classifications in Illinois and Indiana. We are dedicated to improving the lives of workers and their families.