



On The Move

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Local 234 meets with Governor over security and funding

On January 8, President Brian Pollitt and union staff members traveled to Harrisburg to meet with Governor Josh Shapiro. The meeting covered two issues important to the Union and our members: (1) the need to enhance safety and security throughout the SEPTA system, especially on the Broad Street and Market Frankford lines; and (2) passage of legislation to increase the stream of funding for public transit. Governor Shapiro showed a keen interest in both topics, and we discussed various ways and means of achieving these shared goals.

The meeting produced good results.

On January 28, 2024, the Inquirer reported that Gov. Shapiro plans to propose a \$282.8 million in new state funding for public transit in his upcoming budget. Shapiro's proposal would generate an estimated \$1.5 billion over five years by increasing the allocation of sales tax revenue dedicated to supporting the state's public transit systems. SEPTA would get the biggest share, close to \$200 million a year.

If enacted, the governor's plan would establish the largest increase in the state's share of public transportation funding since legislation in 2013 earmarked \$450 million yearly from the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

Also, as part of the funding deal, Shapiro expects SEPTA to develop a real plan to tackle crime and disorder and cleanliness on its system so employees and riders can feel safe and comfortable, an essential step in rider and revenue recovery since the pandemic. Shapiro is also urging elected leaders of the four suburban counties and Philadelphia to increase their local contributions to SEPTA.

The Union is working to ensure that the next budget includes an increase in transit funding.

Union negotiates new First Class Electrician trainee position

Openings for a new First Class Electrician trainee position will be posted this week. The new position is the result of a union initiative to provide training for incumbent members and new hires to fill vacancies and protect bargaining unit work in the Facilities Power Department. The new trainee classification is Job #0753. If interested, you can contact SEPTA's Training Center (x7244) to apply.

The training program runs for twelve months. The program is comprised of field work only. The pay during the training period is 90% of the First-Class rate. Upon successful completion of the program a trainee will be considered fully qualified as an Electrician First Class. Upon completion of the training program, there is a 60-day probation period during which time trainees can be dropped or elect to return to their former position with no loss of seniority.

If successful, other training programs could be established to help fill the many open positions throughout SEPTA's facilities and maintenance locations.

Union files grievance over subletting camera maintenance work

On January 31, the Union filed a grievance over the subletting of camera maintenance work on SEPTA's buses and trains.

The grievance came in the aftermath of a former SEPTA manager's guilty plea in a bribery and extortion case involving the subletting of camera maintenance work to Spector Logistics in 2014 and Gatekeeper in 2018.

Although the Union previously filed grievances protesting the subletting of this work, the evidence of fraud in the contracting process was not established until now.

In the grievance, the Union contends that the proven evidence of fraud in the contracting process shows that since 2014 the Authority has breached its obligation to engage in *good faith* discussions with the Union over decisions to sublet the camera maintenance work as required by Section 431(a) of the labor agreement.

The grievance demands that SEPTA (1) terminate the current camera maintenance contract; (2) perform all camera maintenance work in-house; and (3) make all affected employees whole from 2014 to the present.

Deon out as SEPTA Board Chairman

In 1995, Pasquale Deon Sr., a Bucks County Republican, joined the SEPTA Board. In 1999, he became Board chairman. Deon has now retired and will be replaced by Democrat Kenneth Lawrence.

During his time on the SEPTA Board, Deon waged war against our members and the union. In 1998, he played a key role in precipitating one of the longest strikes in Local 234's history. Deon's hostility to Local 234 began during the 1995 negotiations.

In April 1995, Union and SEPTA negotiators reached an agreement that provided significant benefits for our members. Before executing the agreement, SEPTA's chief negotiator tried to obtain Board approval. He came back with an incredible story. The Board refused to sign off on the agreement. Although he warned the Board that a strike would result---one that the Board was not prepared for---Deon and other Board members refused to give in, leading to a ten-day transit strike in which SEPTA got smoked by union militancy and solidarity and Deon fumed.

From the start of the 1998 negotiations, it was clear that Deon was determined to roll back the gains made in 1995. SEPTA's negotiators came to the table, not with some contract proposals, but with a completely rewritten agreement more favorable to SEPTA management in every way.

The negotiations dragged on for months without a resolution. On June 1, 1998, the Local went on strike. The strike lasted for 40 days and even after it was over there were still disagreements about important issues. It took until October 22, 1998, before we could execute a new Memorandum of Agreement. With Deon at the helm, Local 234 had to strike in 1998, 2005, 2009, and 2016 and deal with countless fights with SEPTA management over our members' rights, and some of these battles persist to this day.

Local 234 is looking forward to working with SEPTA's new Board Chairman.