



MENDOCINO COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

NEWS RELEASE

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TO: MENDOCINO COUNTY NEWS MEDIA
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Ukiah, California... *September 26, 2013*

Union's Illegal Strike Serves to Further Diminish Employee Morale; Public Services Remain Largely Unaffected

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 1021 conducted a self-described "unfair labor practices" strike on Tuesday, September 24, 2013. The County is disappointed that SEIU chose to strike rather than continue working through the legal bargaining process. The County believes the strike on Tuesday was an illegal economic strike, and therefore filed an unfair labor practice charge against SEIU on Thursday, September 19 upon learning of the intended strike. The California Public Employment Relations Board is responsible for adjudicating this matter. Under the law, workers have the right to join in a strike action, or to not join a strike action. The County is very supportive of those employees who chose to come to work, facing intimidation and bullying tactics for daring to "cross the picket lines."

THE SAFETY OF CONSTITUENTS, PICKETERS AND EMPLOYEES, WAS FIRST AND FOREMOST DURING THE ILLEGAL STRIKE.

Sheriff Tom Allman arrived early on the morning of the 24th to the County's Administration Center and then the Yokayo facilities. On scene, Sheriff Allman was able to help facilitate access to the buildings in addition to securing the right of picketers to express their message. The Sheriff stated that he is "not aware of any traffic or safety laws having been broken by SEIU during their strike on Tuesday." The Sheriff remained with the Board during its morning and afternoon session in anticipation of an SEIU demonstration directed towards the Board itself. The morning session remained uneventful, however, and the Sheriff's Office itself remained unimpacted by the strike.

Board Chairman Dan Hamburg stated, "The Board extends its thanks and appreciation to Sheriff Tom Allman and his deputies for their assistance in maintaining an orderly atmosphere during Tuesday's strike action by SEIU. The Board also commends union members who conducted the work stoppage in a dignified manner." Hamburg rearranged the Board's afternoon agenda to accommodate additional public expression after SEIU's leadership missed the regularly scheduled morning public expression period, choosing instead to appear during a noticed public hearing on a planning matter concerning Caspar.

THE IMPACT OF THE ILLEGAL STRIKE ON MOST COUNTY OFFICES AND SERVICES WAS MINIMAL.

According to Mendocino County Chief Probation Officer Buck Ganter, “The Ukiah, Fort Bragg, and Willits Probation Offices were all open and operating on Tuesday. All Court obligations were fulfilled and the Juvenile Hall operated normally and was fully staffed.” Chief Ganter expressed his appreciation to all staff who kept the Department open for business and to the Juvenile Hall food services staff for “coming to work and making the safety and care of the kids their priority.”

Health and Human Services Agency Director Stacey Cryer issued a comprehensive strike contingency plan in the lead-up to the action by SEIU. “Our goal was to keep all of the main points of access open with as many services as possible being provided,” Cryer said. “we met these goals with astounding success. I’m really proud of my team.” Cryer went on to cite an extensive list of services provided throughout the County during the strike that included 178 clients being served through the Employment and Family Assistance Center, 80 case actions in Child Welfare Services, six fresh walk-ins for Veterans Services, and a healthy litter of nine new puppies being born in the County’s animal shelter (please call 707-463-4427 if you are interested in adopting these strike puppies). “We not only kept the doors to HHSA open, but we continued to provide services.”

Director Cryer was disappointed early Tuesday morning as picketers blocked employee access to HHSA’s Yokayo Complex around 7:00 am. “We had about 100 SEIU employees wanting to work who were being interfered with,” she said, “but as soon as the Ukiah Police Department and Sheriff Allman arrived on scene, the picketers became more orderly and we were able to get the public’s business underway.”

WHILE THE ILLEGAL STRIKE HAD LESS IMPACT THAN SEIU INTENDED, SOME SERVICES WERE EFFECTIVELY CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC ON TUESDAY.

Among the Department of Transportation’s (DOT) 80 staff members, 49 went on strike, closing down all regularly scheduled operations and forcing the department to focus on emergency calls only. Some SEIU employees remained on the job but noted backlash from those who went on strike. Director of Transportation, Howard Dashiell, stated, “SEIU has been undertaking an aggressive effort to organize this strike in DOT for over six months now, and I don’t think that’s been in the spirit of good faith negotiating at the table... especially considering that the bargaining process began in June.” Dashiell went on to state that, “For months now, they (SEIU) have been appearing at the road yards unannounced – even going to the worksites themselves. It was so disruptive that our Safety Officer eventually had to intervene because the union was disrupting the work of our flaggers while they were on station, which is simply unacceptable and dangerous behavior.” The County’s library system and Fort Bragg planning office rounded out the remaining two offices effectively shut down during the strike, though many employees remained behind to work.

THE COUNTY REMAINS RESOLUTE DESPITE THE ILLEGAL STRIKE AND ITS NEGATIVE AFFECT ON MORALE.

The County has declared impasse in the negotiations with SEIU, and the procedures required to move forward call for a State mediator that can assist the parties in reaching a resolution. The County hopes that the Union will participate in good faith in the mediation process to attempt to resolve the outstanding issues.

Mendocino County has undergone a major financial restructuring in light of the organization’s lack of preparation for the economic recession starting in 2008. The recession adversely impacted the

County's primary source of revenue - the property tax - added over \$100 million in employee pension liabilities to the County's books and nearly brought the County to bankruptcy. "The old way of doing business needed to change." stated Chief Executive Officer, Carmel J. Angelo. "The County needs to restructure, pay off debt, build stability and realize economic growth before we can look at sustainable pay increases for our employees. Otherwise a pay increase is just another false promise." Angelo cited the County's improved credit ratings, improved reserve and debt levels, and renewed interest by investors in the community as signs that the County's future has an upward trajectory.

"The Board regrets that negotiations toward an extension of the County's contract with SEIU have proven to be problematic," stated Board Chairman Dan Hamburg. "The Board remains united, however, in its determination to protect and preserve the fiscal health of the County in highly uncertain economic circumstances."

Released by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carmel J. Angelo".

Carmel J. Angelo
Chief Executive Officer