



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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City of Palo Alto: Essential City Services Not Affected by SEIU Walkout

Palo Alto, CA – Essential City services will not be impacted by the union’s unauthorized walkout today endorsed by the leadership of SEIU, the union that represents more than 600 Palo Alto employees. According to Human Resources Director Russ Carlsen, today’s employee action is an illegal strike.

The City is still negotiating with SEIU and no impasse has been officially declared by either side. Prior to the declaration of impasse, both the City and SEIU are required to negotiate in good faith.

“As far as the City is concerned, withholding labor, regardless of what it is called, is considered a strike,” said Carlsen. “Our attorneys have advised us that SEIU’s decision to go on strike prior to either party declaring impasse would not be bargaining in good faith.”

Yesterday, the City was granted a court injunction that requires 99 out of 108 City workers represented by SEIU and identified as “essential to health and safety” to report to work today. These workers operate the Regional Water Quality Control Plant, the water, gas and electric system, and 9-1-1 dispatch.

“Public health and safety is our number one priority so our contingency plan focuses on ensuring essential services are provided,” said James Keene, Palo Alto’s City Manager. “Police, fire and emergency medical services provided by the City will not be affected by a walk-out.”

Out of 526 SEIU employees who were scheduled to work today, 305 did not report for work, about 58% of the SEIU workforce.

The City will minimize service disruptions to the community during the strike as much as possible. Here are the known impacts to existing City service levels at this time:

- Utilities Customer Service Center is closed and walk in customers are being handled on a case by case basis on the 2nd floor in City Hall;
- In Utilities and Public Works, some routine work (construction, concrete, asphalt, and tree work) has been stopped
- Development Center will have reduced staffing levels
- Parks will have reduced staffing

Negotiations between the union and the City have been ongoing since May and more than 22 meetings have taken place. The City's last scheduled meeting with SEIU was September 22.

"We are disappointed that union leadership would choose to call a strike while we are still negotiating," said Keene. "From day one, the City has hoped to reach an agreement with our employees that works for the community, our organization, and our employees." Keene stated that he hoped SEIU leadership would meet again at the negotiating table rather than resort to a work stoppage. The City's latest proposal to the union on Tuesday reflects further reductions of its request for cost savings from SEIU.

"Since June we have made concessions, and through our latest proposal, the City has reduced its requests to SEIU by almost \$2 million (for FY 2010, year one of the proposed new agreement)," said Rob De Geus, a member of the City's negotiating team. "The City's package still seeks long-term structural savings through employee sharing in the costs of the pension and health care contributions but has added furloughs and eliminated its wage cut proposal."

The SEIU represents 617 employees in the City of Palo Alto out of a total of 1,055. Striking employees maintain parks, review building plans and perform many other City services for members of the community.

For more information about any changes in programs or services today, the community may visit www.cityofpaloalto.org/ or call the City's Main Information Desk at (650) 329-2100.

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