



# THE MANAGER

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## MAJOR LAYOFFS THREATEN CITY WORKERS

By Vanessa DeSantis

As Federal Lawmakers remain deadlocked over how much stimulus to provide, thereby paralyzing state and local governments throughout the nation, the MEA is concerned about the harm this can do to New York City workers. Thousands may be laid off, beginning as soon as October 1, 2020.

As many as 22,000 City workers may eventually lose their jobs, according to numerous press reports.

*The Chief-Leader* reported on August 31 that, "The Municipal Labor Committee has apparently convinced Mayor de Blasio to delay sending out layoff notices that would have affected up to 22,000 city workers. Labor Commissioner Renee Campion stated August 31 that discussions will continue 'on a daily basis' while waiting for Albany to decide whether to grant the city additional borrowing authority that the unions are urging."

The City faces an economic crisis caused by the novel coronavirus, which has cut deeply into the tax revenues collected by the City. Mayor Bill De Blasio has promised to find ways to make up for this lost revenue that can avoid some jobs losses. But those budget cuts can only delay layoffs for a few weeks.

"The MEA's position is there should be no layoffs," said MEA President Shelly Shulman. "The City should figure out other ways of saving

money in order to balance its budget."

The MEA has worked closely with the City's Office of Labor Relations (OLR) since New York State shut down to slow the spread of the coronavirus. First, MEA advocated for managers at essential agencies who were concerned about their safety. Now MEA is advocating for managers concerned about their jobs.

OLR aims to reduce the number of job cuts for both union and non-union staff. "If there have to be layoffs, they should be across the board layoffs," says Mr. Shulman. Any layoffs should certainly not target managerial employees, he said. Also, the City should consider buyouts before layoffs for people who are ready to retire, according to President Shulman.

For managers, having civil service protection may be the key keeping their jobs. A City worker who is in a permanent competitive position has an advantage over a provisional worker.

"We are most concerned with avoiding needless layoffs and the proper treatment of career managerial employees," said Linda Barnes, Executive Director of the MEA.

### THE MEA FIGHTS FOR FAIRNESS

During the Pandemic managers not only worked longer hours but



**New York Mayor Bill de Blasio**

also put their lives at risk, working beyond the scope of their job responsibilities. For example, at Elmhurst Hospital certain managers were serving and feeding patients. One manager and MEA member Derik Braswell gave his life helping patients. Another MEA member, Manny Lacayo, tested positive and told Mr. Shulman he'd been assisting COVID-19 patients with their meals.

Given how many sacrifices City Managers have made during this horrifying time, an additional loss of jobs and job security is the last thing they need.

"We should not be the first in line when there are layoffs. We have the back of New York City. The City should have our back in return," said President Shulman.

# Bits & Pieces



## WE'RE BACK!

*By Linda A. Barnes, NYC MEA Executive Director*

Yes, the NYC Managerial Employees Association (NYCMEA) is open again. On June 22, 2020 we returned to our 42 Broadway office amid some concerns and skepticism.

We opened in accordance with the Phase III mandates of the City and State offices. MEA staff were excited to return to some sense of normal business operations.

During the peak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, we were required by the Governor's mandate to quickly shut down all operations, with very limited advance notification. From March 20, 2020 to June 22, 2020, we functioned within a Telework capacity from our homes. Was this difficult? Yes. For example, we did not have full access to data, files and documents needed to meet the needs of members, maintain financial credibility and sustain effective methods of communication with vendors, board and agency representatives. As Executive Director, within 24-48 hours, it became necessary for me to implement alternative methods of continuing the day-to-day operations of the MEA from home.

Immediately, approaches were developed and implemented to set up online processes to pay our bills, receive payments, and work with our IT Consultants to access external data and files. For years, we had functioned under a paper system for various administrative transactions.

The Pandemic eliminated our access to the U.S. Postal Service. Additionally, a problem occurred with our office telephone system, preventing us from receiving voice mail messages from our members. Fortunately, this was not a major issue as members utilized e-mail, my home and cell telephones to connect with us.

We received myriad concerns from our members functioning as essential workers. During the peak of the Pandemic, several essential workers were required to report to work settings, without appropriate PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). This instilled a sense of grave fear and alarm in managerial employees. They were afraid for their safety, as well as the safety of their family members. While working from our own remote locations, the MEA leadership developed written position letters to City leaders regarding the concerns of managerial employees.

We believe this helped to eliminate some of the agency-wide PPE and safety concerns for our members, as well as other managers.

The Phase III Return – Finally, the day arrived when we could return

to some sense of normalcy. What's different? We have implemented the Governor's safety template to ensure all MEA staff and operations can resume with precautionary measures. Full training was provided to staff regarding safety measures (social distancing, screening, hygiene and cleaning). All staff were provided PPE supplies including hygiene and sanitizing products; temperature checks are conducted daily, before staff can begin assignments; a safety questionnaire is completed daily, before assignments begin.

Online processes are fully operational to maintain continued financial credibility. Teleconference and virtual meetings have been implemented for more effective communication. Face-to-face interactions from visitors have been curtailed.

What is the lesson learned so far through this Pandemic? We know we can quickly adapt to change, with limited concerns. We can continue our more than 50-year history of sustaining our organization and demonstrating to our members:

**We're Open  
for Business, and  
WE'VE STILL  
GOT YOUR BACK!**

# MEA ADVOCATES POWERFULLY IN TOUGH TIMES

By Vanessa DeSantis



**MEA President Shelly Shulman**

Managers give their all to New York City, going above and beyond their job descriptions during the crisis caused by the novel coronavirus. But they shouldn't have to put their health at risk. MEA advocates to make sure city managers have the right gear to protect themselves on the job.

"Though we have no collective bargaining contracts to define our working conditions, this does not give any agency the right to directly threaten or compromise the health and safety of managerial employees," said MEA President Shelly Shulman, in his President's Report to the members for 2019-2020. The complete text is available on our web site:

<https://nycmea.org/nycmea-presidents-report-2019-20/>

MEA is also fighting to save the jobs of managers as the city considers layoffs to close a massive hole in the City budget caused by the Pandemic. MEA is

also finding new ways to recruit new members to make up for those managerial positions that were reallocated to the unions..

## **MANAGERS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19**

City Managers have been on the front lines of the fight against the coronavirus in every City agency and every department. "We are always required to go the extra mile, work all shifts and extra hours," said President Shelly Shulman.

For example, managers at Health + Hospitals (H+H) worked extra hours and weekends during the peak of the crisis, at the request of their agency. But managers don't get overtime pay or compensatory time for the extra hours they work, unlike other City employees.

Many managers at H+H also stepped up to help sick patients, even if their regular duties did not involve patient care. However, managers are just as susceptible as everyone else to infections, including COVID-19. Some have preexisting conditions. Some are 50 or older. Several have tested positive for the coronavirus and some have died.

"There are agencies ignoring these facts and not allowing certain managers to work from home even while their staff are doing so," says Shulman. "Others are forcing managers to work directly with infected populations even though these managers meet the CDC guidelines for at-risk people."

The MEA has contacted the Mayor's Office of Labor Relations and the non-mayoral agencies to ensure that all employees have

proper Personal Protective Equipment and are allowed to telecommute.

It is appropriate to provide "hero-pay" or "combat pay", as some are calling it, for nurses and doctors on the front lines. While our members are proud of working for our great City and supporting front-line staff, the MEA believes all front-line workers, regardless of job title, should be included when it's time to compensate essential workers for their heroic service.

The City has already asked a lot from managers. A little over two years ago the H+H laid off hundreds of managers. The City also took two days of annual leave from Managers who have served more than 15 years to finance its Paid Parental Leave policy.

"This is an issue that we will not let go away and continue to bring up with the Mayor's Office of Labor Relations and the non-mayoral agencies," says Shulman.

## **MEA SEEKS NEW MEMBERS**

The MEA has also gained new members through its recruitment and outreach efforts, even though it continues to lose members because of unionization and attrition. It completed calendar year 2019 with a combined total of 2,964 active and retired members.

"Every time a member shares stories with fellow managers about the powerful advocacy resource they've found with MEA, it allows the Association to gain new members and get stronger in its overall efforts and efficacy," said President Shulman.



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## **SMMP IS MONEY IN YOUR POCKET**

*By Larry Konstan and Stu Eber*

Although most managerial employees and retirees are eligible for Superimposed Major Medical Plan (SMMP), not everyone is covered for medical expenses as described below. These are general rules. When you have a concern please check the New York City Office of Labor Relations website:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/olr/about/about-contact-olr.page>

for complete coverage details.

Most active employees, their spouses and children living in the same household and retirees not in receipt of or eligible for Medicare are eligible for SMMP. Medicare recipients are entitled to reimbursement for out of pocket expenses excluding prescription drugs.

Are there deductibles? Short answer, YES. The chart below shows is how they are determined.

If you are in an HMO plan then you are not eligible for SMMP with few exceptions. Also, Long Term Care, dental and optical bills are not covered.

Some benefits are covered without any deductible. Hearing aid exams and hearing aids are covered without a deductible at 90% of costs with hearing aid maximum benefit being \$1,500 per ear. Hearing aids can be replaced every two years as necessary.

Periodic physical or screening exams (Adult Wellness) to detect and intervene before serious disease development are covered at 100% with no deductible. Not every out of pocket expense is fully covered. SMMP allows what it feels is an appropriate cost for a medical procedure. For example, a doctor may charge \$10,000 for a procedure. SMMP may

decide that the maximum for that procedure is \$9,000. SMMP will pay 90% of what is not covered by your primary insurance, after the deductible is met.

When a charge is excessively high SMMP may work with you to reduce it. It can save you thousands of dollars.

We advise going to this link

<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/olr/downloads/pdf/mbf/smmpclm.pdf>

and print out the SMMP Claims Form. Fill in your personal information. Photocopy proof of payment for up to two years of medical and drug bills. Staple these copies to the form and mail to the address on the back of the claims form. And please remember: Keep all your receipts for out of pocket costs. Don't let yourself lose reimbursements.

<b>GROUP HEALTH COVERAGE (e.g. GHI)</b>	<b>DRUG RIDER</b>	<b>1 PERSON</b>	<b>2 PEOPLE</b>	<b>3+ People</b>
Yes	Yes	\$500	\$1000	\$1500
Yes	No	\$2500	\$5000	\$7500
No	No	\$10000	\$20000	\$30000