



THE MANAGER

www.nycmea.org

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COVID-19 AND CITY MANAGERS

The MEA continues to work with DCAS and the individual agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic to help our members protect their health and perform their managerial duties. DCAS issued Personnel Services Bulletin 600-3 Temporary Citywide Telework Policy for City Employees During the COVID-19 Outbreak on March 13, 2020. It says that the City "is implementing a temporary citywide telework policy to enact and encourage social distancing strategies in the workplace. The temporary policy will allow certain employees to work from home, while ensuring the continuity of agency business operations. This policy does not supersede City rules, regulations, or policies applicable in the workplace, but rather is designed to facilitate the performance of City business in alternate work locations."

Agencies are also trying to implement alternate staggered work schedules to enable employees, including managers, to work from home and in their offices. Clearly offices directly serving the public will have different criteria than technical, administrative, support and back office operations.

DOHMH states that the commonly reported symptoms of COVID-19 are "fever (temperature over 100.4° F or 38° C), cough, shortness of breath (difficulty breathing), and sore throat. If you have any of these symptoms, and they are not due to a pre-existing health condition like asthma or emphysema, you may have COVID-19 and you must stay home. People who are at most risk for severe illness are people who are over 50

years old or who have other health conditions, including chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system."

Please keep your agency informed of any illness during this period.

The MEA intends to continue to provide our members with all services during the current crisis. You can reach us by email through MEA Executive Director Linda Barnes at

lbarnes@nycmea.org or by phone at (212) 964-0035.

All MEA meetings are canceled until further notice. Committees may hold meetings via teleconference calls. Committee chairs shall contact Executive Director Linda Barnes one week before the meeting to make the arrangements.

Above all, we hope you and your loved ones are safe during this crisis.

MEA MEMBERS RAISE THEIR HANDS FOR \$2 DUES INCREASE

By Bendix Anderson

Members of New York City Managerial Employees Association (MEA) voted unanimously, 42-0-3, to increase their MEA dues at the February 13 General Membership Meeting.

"This increase will allow MEA to balance its budget and to grow our organization by improving member services and enhancing our outreach activities," says MEA President Shelly Shulman.

The change will add \$2 to the bi-weekly dues that MEA automatically receives from the paychecks of its members. Active members will now pay \$14 per pay period for their membership in MEA. Retiree dues will increase from \$40 to \$45 a year. This is the first time MEA's dues have increased since 2007.

DWINDLING SURPLUSES

The new income will help MEA continue its work advocating for New York City managers and will help offset the costs of running the organ-



ization, which have naturally increased over the last 13 years. "Our expenses are going up, while our revenues are flat, at best," says Stu Eber, president emeritus of MEA, speaking at the Feb. 13 meeting. "For the past few years we have been running annual surpluses of \$50,000. This year we are down to a surplus of \$30,000 and 2020 projects to be only \$5,000."

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Bits & Pieces



WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK— THAT'S MEA

By Linda A. Barnes, NYC MEA Executive Director

When we visit our chapters, we always tell our members about all of the benefits of being in the MEA. That said, members can still surprise us with questions about our services. In this article, I will provide a re-cap for you to understand the importance of

"WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK"

—that's who we are and have been for more than 50 years at the Managerial Employees Association.

WORK-RELATED ISSUES

We've learned over the years that most work-related issues are Human Resources (HR) or Payroll driven. To name a few: performance evaluations, time and leave, and/or conflicts. The MEA leadership is experienced at resolving these matters. Usually, when members contact our office, we ask if there's been a discussion with an immediate supervisor or the HR/Labor Relations leader. It's important to take this step before contacting the MEA. It helps us better understand the outcome of a discussion, as well as develop a plan of action for advocacy and problem resolution. We've learned that many of these matters are based on ineffective communication and misconceptions. This past year, we responded to more than 391

requests from our members; more than 143 issues were based upon work-related concerns. Approximately 95% of these matters were resolved without additional conflict. Please continue to reach out to us when you have a concern.

LEGAL SERVICES

Our MEA attorney, Stuart Salles provides a wide range of legal services to our members. Mr. Salles has a broad base of knowledge, experience and skills totaling more than 40 years. He and his legal team handle EEO interviews and decisions resulting in disciplinary actions, COIB (Conflict of Interest Board) and DOI (Department of Investigation) hearings.

STOP! Do not respond to an EEO interview, DOI or COIB notification before you contact the MEA office. Too often, our members attend these meetings and realize subsequently that they did not understand the process or complaint. They contact us after attending the meetings, and it becomes necessary for our attorney and his team to step in and provide "damage control".

Legal service benefits also include non-work related concerns such as real estate, divorce, wills, power of attorney,

etc. All members receive a free consultation. If the member decides further legal assistance is needed, they receive this benefit at a discounted rate.

FINANCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

The MEA conducts seminars throughout the year on financial planning topics, updates regarding retirement and MBF (Management Benefit Fund) matters and test prep training for civil service exams. Representatives from the Management Benefit Fund have cooperated with us over the years, to provide updates to our members.

We are firmly committed to our strategic goal of consistently "giving back" to our members. We are able to do this by providing scholarship funding to our members and their dependents annually, as well as throughout the year. Additionally, we support academic endeavors by providing tuition reimbursement at 50% of tuition costs, up to a maximum of \$650 per semester.

Of course, you've heard all this before, this is just a reminder that,

**"WE'VE STILL
GOT YOUR BACK!"**

SHARING KNOWLEDGE IN THE CIVIL SERVICE

The MEA Profiles Tina Ramsey

By Vanessa DeSantis

32 YEARS AT DCAS

Tina Ramsey remembers taking her first Civil Service Exam: always a straight A+ student, she expected to breeze right through. She was more than a little surprised to receive a ho-hum 88th percentile score with the list number 528. She vowed to do better.

For every exam that Tina applied for after that, she prepped using a test guide purchased at the Civil Service Book Shop. Studying paid off — she was hired right away as a provisional after receiving a score of 98.75 with the list number 8 and became civil service about 3 months afterwards with the NYC Department of Personnel, now known as the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS).

Ms. Ramsey now helps others with the Civil Service exams process. Through promotional opportunities she became an Administrative Manager (Managerial) at DCAS in 2002. She continues to work for the Bureau of Examinations with the Administration, Customer, and Exam Support, where she manages the customer service window and deals with everything from people applying for a test to appealing a resulting score.

DCAS offers civil service exams tailored to each job title. It uses the results of these exams to create a list of potential candidates to fill vacancies in City agencies.

“If you’ve been hired to a competitive position but haven’t taken the test for the relevant civil service title, you’re a provisional employee,” explained Ms. Ramsey. “If a test has been given and an eligible list has been established, agencies are obligated to hire candidate(s) from the list for that title to replace their provisionals.”

The test for any job title is often only offered once every few years. How-

ever, test takers can sign up to receive monthly updates on upcoming tests by receiving emails from DCAS.

In Ms. Ramsey’s 32-year career, she’s seen things speed up at DCAS. Now, applicants can apply online and take their test on the computer and receive exit documentation to calculate their tentative results based on the number of correct answers from the number of questions on the test. In addition to electronic testing, there are now many new functionalities that allow candidates to reset their password, update their address and telephone number, and soon have the ability to appeal their disqualification online too.

Back in the 1990s when Tina was the Deputy Director of the Application Section, she said, “we have received well over 100,000 paper applications in the mail for one exam and at the same time have 17 other exams open that month.”

“We had buckets and buckets and buckets of mail that had to be opened, processed and manually data entered.”

KEEPING ACTIVE AT THE MEA

Tina joined the MEA in July 2004, starting out as the Assistant Chapter Director for the Municipal Chapter and an Executive Board Member. She later became the Chapter Director for the Municipal Chapter and through elections, became the Chapter Director for DCAS, once it attained the 25 members required to be recognized as its own Chapter.

Ms. Ramsey also presents and hosts financial workshops as the chair of the Financial Seminar Series, a subgroup of the MEA’s Organizational Committee. Workshops have covered topics from budgeting, life insurance, taxes and long-term care to investments and homeownership.



Tina Ramsey

Tina’s experience in finance began at her first job as a bank teller. There, she learned the importance of being in tune with the people she assisted. As a bank teller, Tina said, “we could go to another bank teller to cash our paycheck.” Instead of doing that, during her lunch break, she would get on the same line as the bank’s customers to cash her paycheck. By sharing in their frustration as the line advanced slowly due to her fellow tellers lollygagging, Tina believed this perspective made her a better and faster teller.

Ms. Ramsey brings the same concern for another person’s experience to her work as an Administrative Manager at DCAS and as the Chapter Director for DCAS and a member of the MEA’s Executive Board, as well as the various Committees she’s a member of or Chairs or co-Chairs. And, she enjoys helping people learn.

Many have heard the quote that Knowledge is Power. However, “having knowledge and keeping it to yourself does not give it power,” she said. “Knowledge is power when you apply it, when you spread it, when you share it.”



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UNANIMOUS VOTE FOR FISCAL STABILITY

MEA MEMBERS RAISE THEIR HANDS FOR \$2 DUES INCREASE

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"During our outreach and chapter meetings as well as other MEA financial planning seminars our members consistently express their gratitude and appreciation for our services," said Executive Director Linda Barnes. "Additional funding is always important towards expanding programs and enhancing benefits and services to our members. This is a step in the right direction."

LEGAL BENEFIT EXTENDED TO ALL MEA MEMBERS

MEA members enjoy free legal representation for work related issues and free legal consultation for non-work related issues, provided by MEA General Counsel Stuart Salles and his team.

"Prior to 2007, the MEA's Counsel advised the Executive Director and the Executive Board," Mr. Salles explained. "Members needing legal

representation for job related problems had to pay counsel out of their own pockets."

Mr. Salles and his team now represent MEA members in any disputes they might have with New York City's Department of Investigation and Conflict of Interest Board (COIB), as well as other disciplinary matters. It can be relatively easy for a manager to overstep the rules. Simply accepting what seems like a generous offer of a cup of coffee from a subordinate could eventually lead to bad feeling or even disciplinary action, if the subordinate feels obligated to make the offer... or perhaps has some disciplinary difficulties of their own that they need to distract from.

"No public servant shall use or intend to his or her position as a public official to obtain any financial gain, contract, license, privilege or any

other private or personal advantage, direct or indirect," according to the City Charter.

"Whatever the problem is, it might seem really picayune -- but that is not how the COIB looks at it," says Salles.

MEA's legal benefit can also help members caught up in Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaints. "Over the last five years, there has been an uptick in EEO complaints," says Salles. He is available for consultation and will join the member at any EEO interview. Executive Director Linda Barnes is also often able to resolve EEO issues before they go too far

