



THE MANAGER

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DARRELL SIMS ELECTED MEA PRESIDENT

By Vanessa DeSantis



*Newly Elected MEA President
Darrell L. Sims*

The MEA will have a new president, starting January 1, 2022. Its Election Committee named Mr. Darrell Sims President-elect at its Nomination Meeting, held on August 4th. The Election Committee was composed of Ms. Adrienne Leaf, Mr. Steve Koulisch, and Mr. Patrick Toner, who chaired the meeting.

"He looks at both sides of every issue, which is important," said current MEA president Shelly Shulman, who nominated Mr. Sims and will continue to serve as president through the rest of 2021. "And he's always been involved in the MEA."

All eight members of the Independence in Action Team slate were unopposed. Effective January 1, 2022, the officeholders for the next three years are Darrell Sims, President; Edgar Landas, Executive Vice President; Bernard Orlan, Treasurer; Lisa Yee, Recording Secretary; Pamela Ross-Barnes, Sam Borkow, Peter Kontogiannis and Cesare Lucido, Directors-at-Large.

A CALLING EARLY ON...

From a young age Darrell Sims showed the qualities that made him a strong choice to become the MEA's new president: hard work, empathy and curiosity.

Sims grew up in a working-class family in Ohio. "I could relate to living on the financial edge from paycheck to paycheck, trying to make ends meet," said Sims. He took on many odd jobs to help his parents provide for himself and his nine brothers and sisters - including janitorial work with his father, retail work at his mother's textile shop and bookstore, and working on his grandfather's farm.

After graduate school, Sims became the first African American registered architect employed by New York City's Dept. of Housing Preservation and Development, the City agency responsible for developing affordable housing.

Equipped with two master's degrees from an Ivy League university, Sims assumed a management title at HPD, eventually becoming the Deputy Director for the Bureau of Multifamily New Construction Design Review Services in 2007.

One of Sims' inclusionary housing development projects is the stunning 250 Ashland Place in Brooklyn's neighborhood of Fort Greene. The 52-story brick and metal building is designed with 586 units of which 282 are affordable housing. He retired from HPD on January 1, 2020, after a 39-year tenure -- with 27 years in a managerial title.

"I have always felt good assisting people who were economically less

fortunate and of a lower income similar to my family," he said.

DARRELL SIMS AND THE MEA

Darrell joined the MEA in 1996 -- its instant appeal being its unique focus on managers and their common concerns and interests.

As MEA's President-elect, Sims will address the thorny issue of recruitment, as MEA continues to lose hundreds of its members as their positions are unionized.

"I think there's a personal satisfaction with being a manager that's beyond what's written on paper," he said. "To get people you are responsible for to produce their best work is a big challenge."

WHERE THE MEA IS GOING

Sims will be working with MEA's new Executive Director, Alice Wong, who joined MEA at the beginning of 2021. He sees Ms. Wong's technological savvy as a powerful recruitment tool.

"She's been big on promoting the MEA, using our website and social media like Facebook, LinkedIn, IG, and Twitter to get the message out," said Sims. "Digital communication is so important."

MEA's Chapter Directors can also play a larger role in bringing new members to MEA. "We want to empower the Chapter Directors more," he said.

Sims already has a long history with the MEA. He's been an active Executive Board member for over 25 years. "After serving the MEA for such a lengthy time, I guess it is my turn to accept the challenge of being President," he said.

MEA STANDS UP FOR MANAGERS AMIDST COVID AND UNIONIZATION

By Bendix Anderson

The New York City Managerial Employees Association (MEA) continues to fight for New York City managers in the same way that managers fought for the City during the coronavirus pandemic.

"City managers were once again called upon to be on the front lines," says Shelly Shulman, MEA President, in his annual President's Report. Managers were asked to work extra hours, even though they typically don't get overtime pay or compensatory time.

MEA advocated for managers when the City furloughed them for five days during the budget crisis caused by the pandemic. "After our battle to get those wages reinstated, the Mayor finally did return the lost pay," says Shulman. "We remain disappointed that managers did lose five days of annual leave."

The MEA continues to attract new members because it advocates for City managers, provides useful resources, and services and benefits, ranging from legal consultation to pensions counseling, according to the President's Report.

NEW MEMBERS JOIN MEA

The number of managers in the MEA remains strong, even though hundreds have become unionized positions. There are still close to 3,000 members in the MEA, including both retirees and those currently working as New York City managers. That's slightly fewer (0.95 percent) from 2019, compared to 2020.

"We lost members – but not as many as we anticipated, so far," says Shulman. Unionization at NYC

Health and Hospitals has proceeded more slowly than anticipated. At the same time, the MEA attracted enough new members to keep its total numbers of members strong. In 2020, 323 new members joined despite the coronavirus pandemic, and 195 new members joined in the first half of 2021.

Several MEA chapters outdid themselves in 2020 meeting aggressive targets for recruitment. "I don't think we recognized the winning chapters in the past," says Alice Wong, who became the MEA's new Executive Director in January 2021. "For the 2020 winners, we recognized them across our social media platforms and in our President's Report."

In 2020, Financial Information Services Administration/ Office of Payroll Administration (FISA-OPA) increased its recruitment of new members by 41 percent, Dept. of Housing Preservation Development by 30 percent, and the Dept. of Design and Construction by 17 percent. The MEA awards winning chapters a stipend, and chapters often utilize the award on events to recognize members and recruit new members. Previous utilization of awards included a baseball game and a morning meet-and-greet breakfast reception.

RESOURCES ON MEA WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

"Providing resources on important topics is a way to highlight MEA's commitment to our members," says Ms. Wong. More than 146,000 users visited the MEA's website in the first half of 2021, up 80 percent from the

entire year of 2020. MEA revived its Facebook page and in April 2021, MEA joined Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Users are drawn to the website and social media platforms by frequent posts sharing valuable resources with MEA members and city managers. The posts also provide useful analysis on what issues are most important to its members. Current hot topics include Medicare Advantage Plus plan and how City workers are returning to the office.

Visitors to the MEA's website also learned about online events — including the MEA's health and wellness seminars and professional development presentations. MEA awarded \$10,000 in scholarships in 2020 to members and their dependents to pursue their educational and career development.

The MEA handled 528 cases in 2020. Nearly half (47.3 percent of these cases) were job-related issues like performance appeals, Equal Employment Opportunity issues and pay parity. MEA members also received legal services for work-related problems (4.7 percent of cases), and also non-work related, legal issues (14.2 percent). MEA also helped managers access benefits (29.7 percent of cases) and provided pension counseling (2.1 percent of the cases).

"Most importantly, when members have matters related to their job, they should reach out to the MEA office first to have representation," says Wong. This kind of support continues to draw managers to join the MEA.

THREE NEW MEA LEADERS

By Vanessa DeSantis



RECORDING SECRETARY-ELECT, LISA YEE

Lisa Yee will become the MEA's new Recording Secretary on January 1, 2022 after being elected as part of the Independence in Action Team (IAT) at the August 4 Nominations Meeting.

Ms. Yee began her career with the City as a Deputy Counsel to the New York City Loft Board and then as an Assistant Chief in the City's Office of the Corporation Counsel. Later she took a management title at the City's Dept. of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). Her legal background helped her understand HPD's various programs. It was at HPD that Ms. Yee learned about the MEA. She was intrigued by the MEA's advocacy for City managers, since they are not allowed to bargain collectively.

Joining the MEA also gave her a chance to meet other people at her professional level. "Being a manager in the City you're sort of always in between the people you supervise and the people who supervise you," said Ms. Yee. "I got to meet a lot of people who I learned a lot from."

The quality of the people who belong to the MEA eventually compelled her to run for office with the organization. "I was always impressed with their generosity of knowledge; they really are the heart of the City's operations."



DIRECTOR-AT-LARGE-ELECT, PETER KONTOGIANNIS

IAT member Peter Kontogiannis will be wearing a new hat at the MEA as its Director-at-Large, starting in January of 2022 after his election on August 4. Until then, he'll continue as MEA's Chapter Director at New York City's Department of Environmental Protection, where he works as an Assistant Deputy Director at the Engineering Audit Office.

Before taking a job with the City, Kontogiannis was a quality assurance auditor in the aerospace industry in the private sector for many years.

"The skill set is transferable," said Mr. Kontogiannis, who now audits at many disparate construction contract sites throughout the City.

Kontogiannis' keen attention to detail makes him an ideal Director-at-Large, where solving ways to expand membership is key, along with keeping members apprised of all the underutilized employee benefits.

"A lot of times people get intimidated," he said. "To find all the little perks is a like needle in a haystack..."

Informal talks outside the meetings help City managers discover benefits to City workers such as being reimbursed for things like the full cost of their Citi Bike and sports club membership.

"It's the special quality of the MEA," he added. "The casual chit chats outside of the main meetings."



DIRECTOR-AT-LARGE-ELECT, SAM BORKOW

Sam Borkow will become the MEA's new Director-at-Large in January. He is currently an Assistant Chapter Director of the Retirees Chapter in addition to being on the Finance, Organization and By-Laws Committees. His efforts to recruit new members have been highly effective each year as Assistant Chapter Director.

"I am very proud to have been an integral part of the recruitment process," said Borkow. "The Retirees Chapter has increased its membership substantially in each of my three terms as Assistant Director."

Mr. Borkow is a retired Deputy Commissioner of the HRA Office of Investigation, Revenue and Enforcement Administration, and has longstanding ties with the MEA and the IAT.

As Director-at-Large, Sam will endeavor to improve benefits for all members and managers alike.



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Joel Fishelson
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