



THE MANAGER

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info@nycmea.org

IN-PERSON WORK, UNPAID OVERTIME, DELAYED RAISES STRESS MANAGERS

By Bendix Anderson



MEA Executive Director Alice Wong and MEA President Darrell Sims testify before City Council about morale among City managers.

City workers must return to their offices partly to set an example to private sector employers, according to Mayor Eric Adams. Those private employers brought roughly half as many employees to Manhattan in November 2022 as they did before the pandemic. That's a huge loss of income for New York's lunch restaurants and after-work bars.

Returning to the office five days a week is a dreary, expensive chore for overworked, underpaid New York City managers, who often prefer to work at least a few days a week from home. Many are already tempted to leave their jobs, according to a recent survey by NYC MEA.

City managers have not received raises since 2019. New York City's budget crisis and a fight over healthcare makes it unlikely those long-awaited raises will arrive soon. Many managers also work unpaid overtime to complete the work at their understaffed agencies. The budget crisis – and hiring freeze -- also makes it unlikely the thousands of vacant positions will suddenly be filled.

In addition to these challenges, all City employees now have to show up to work in person — from the Mayor's Office down to City agen-

cies — even though many private sector employers still let their employees work remotely at least part of the time.

"Morale among City employees is low — we hear this from our members, time and time again," says MEA Executive Director Alice Wong, testifying before City Council September 9, 2022. "The two drivers are pay raises and telework options."

GREAT RESIGNATION STILL ON FOR CITY MANAGERS

Because of the required return to the office for City workers, one-in-four managers are actively looking for another job or planning to retire, according to a survey of MEA members held July 2022. That includes 12.22% actively job hunting outside NYC, 5.56% actively looking in the City, and 7.41% who plan to retire in 12 months or less. Another 20.74 % were also looking for jobs, but passively.

WORK FROM HOME SURVEY RESULTS	
<i>Because of the return to work, I am currently:</i>	
Actively looking for a new job outside of the city	12.22%
Actively looking for a new job within the city	5.56%
Passively looking for a job	20.74%
Staying at my agency	27.96%
Retiring within the next year	7.41%
Prefer not to answer	26.11%
<i>Click anywhere on box to see complete survey results</i>	

Close to two-thirds (62.78%) of managers disagree or strongly disagree with the City's position that City workers should "lead by example" and work at the office, according to the MEA survey.

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PARTLY CLOUDY AND COLDER

Happy Autumn and Happy Holidays! I hope everyone enjoyed a wonderful summer.

Executive Director Alice Wong and I testified at the NYC Council Oversight and Investigations Committee and Civil Service and Labor Committee Joint Hearing held on September 9, 2022.

The hearing was titled "Oversight: Maintaining New York City's Municipal Workforce" and its purpose was to investigate why the vacancy rate for the municipal workforce had skyrocketed from 1.5% in 2019 to over 8% or 24,000 vacant positions at the end of Fiscal Year 2022.

We testified that employee morale is low because of no pay raises and the Mayor's back to office mandate for the entire City workforce without a telework option.

We emphasized that there is a need to develop incentives to retain the existing workforce as well as attract candidates to fill vacant positions. We presented copies of MEA advocacy letters and the July 2022 MEA Telework / WFH Survey to both Committees.

During the October 18, 2022 MEA Executive Board Meeting, the Directors voted unanimously in favor of a proposed resolution to object to Section 12-126 of the Administrative Code (Section 12-126) being amended by the New York City Council. As follow-up, MEA sent letters to all fifty-one City Council Members, Comptroller Brad Lander, Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, the five Borough Presidents, and The Chief expressing our objection to amending Section 12-126. Section 12-126 codifies the City's obligation to provide health insurance coverage for City employees, retirees, and their dependents.

As follow-up to our letter to the Comptroller objecting to amendment of Section 12-126 and the Office of Labor Relations (OLR) October 28, 2022, letter to the Municipal Labor Committee (MLC),

on November 9, 2022, MEA met with the Comptroller's Office. We were advised that no Medicare Advantage Plus plan (MAP) contract was submitted to the Comptroller's Office since the former contract from Anthem/ Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield was rejected because of financial information being incomplete.

Additionally, Alice Wong and I met with the City Council Speaker Adam's Office on November 14, 2022 and reiterated MEA's objection to amending the Administrative Code. Our meeting ended with MEA agreeing to share letters to Mayor Adams, OLR, MEA Telework / WFH Survey and union newsletters containing MAP misinformation with Speaker Adams' Office.

MEA's Retiree Chapter Meeting was held on November 17, 2022. President of the NYC Organization of Public Service Retirees, Marianne Pizzitola and Stuart Eber, MEA President Emeritus and Chair of COMRO were panel speakers for the meeting.

Ms. Pizzitola discussed the status of the MAP Appellate Court hearing



*By NYCMEA President
Darrell L. Sims*

which commenced on October 27, 2022. The court issued a decision on November 22 in the plaintiffs' favor:

"Administrative Code § 12-126 (b) (1) provides: 'The city will pay the entire cost of health insurance coverage for city employees, city retirees, and their dependents, not to exceed one hundred percent of the full cost of H.I.P.- H.M.O. on a category basis.'

The court correctly determined that Administrative Code §12-126 (b) (1) requires respondents to pay the entire cost, up to the statutory cap, of any health insurance plan a retiree selects."

Mr. Eber discussed the impact of the proposed amendment to Section 12-126 on health care benefits for municipal employees, retirees and their dependents. The video of the meeting can be found [HERE](#). Enter code **L7g*jy3G** to view.

The MEA Executive Board acknowledges and appreciates the hard work of our members and continues representing NYC managers to the best of our abilities. We wish everyone a Safe, Healthy, and Peaceful - Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and Happy Kwanzaa.

CONSTANTLY STRIVING FOR PROGRESS

MEA Profiles Member

CHERYL BEAMON

By Vanessa DeSantis



Cheryl Beamon

MEA member Cheryl Beamon appreciates being a part of an Association that advocates for City managers and helps them make more empowered choices.

"It's important that we are sharing our views and represented as a group," said Ms. Beamon. "Not just as individuals."

Cheryl's already put those values to work in her new role as the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Associate Commissioner of the Office of Workforce Development; a position she was promoted to back in July.

Before that she was the Executive Director of the ACS Workforce Institute, which she joined in December 2018. There she was responsible for helping to execute the development of learning programs and overseeing the budget for the Institute. She also provided training for ACS staff and contractor agencies.

Her new role will oversee the workforce training in the ACS Office of Training and Workforce Development which consists of three entities: The Workforce Institute, the James Satterwhite Academy, and the Professional Development Program. She will be more actively involved in assisting ACS

leadership and contracted service provider agencies by addressing their learning and development needs as well as working more closely with Deputy Commissioner Andrew White to guide the agency to achieve the strategic goals of the agency.

According to Ms. Beamon it's a "broader, more cohesive role." One goal is continuing to advance a trauma-informed approach in the workforce training of ACS employees.

"We are not there to assign, fix or blame, but to help families heal so that they can meet the needs of their children."

Concern for mental and emotional wellbeing extends to her staff as well as the families they assist. In recent years ACS has addressed issues of workplace burnout by implementing holistic practices for employees. For example, the agency now has healing circles and meditation classes.

"The psychological wellbeing of our staff to be able to share their thoughts and views is very important," said Ms. Beamon. "We want to model what staff should be modeling for families."

EARLY WORK WITH CHILDREN AND MOTHERS

Cheryl's first job at the Human Resources Administration (HRA) Office of Child Support Enforcement as a Child Support Specialist and Procedure Writer had her noticing the connection between unemployment and child welfare. Seeing it as a systemic issue made her curious to learn what perpetuates the cycle of poverty and trauma and focus on prevention.

When an opportunity opened up to work for the City, Cheryl took

her experience helping mothers and children with her, along with her lifelong mantras.

One of her favorite quotes is from Martin Luther King's famous 1966 speech at Southern Methodist University, which refers to the dangers of "adjusting" to things like discrimination or bigotry: "As long as injustice is around, it will be necessary to bring that injustice to the surface."

"I always say two things: one is that temporary surrender of security is needed to be able to change," said Ms. Beamon. "And that we should never be too adjusted to things as they are."

Avoiding complacency and taking on challenges seems to come with the territory of her new role...

"I think the biggest responsibilities I will have will be ensuring that Deputy Commissioners meet their mandates and coordinating the efforts of our agency's DREAM and CARE programs."

The DREAM program prepares seventh-grade students in New York City public schools to take the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT) in the eighth grade. And the CARES program (which stands for Collaborative Assessment, Response, Engagement & Support) is, according the New York City government web site, "an alternative, non-investigatory child protection response to reports made to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment."

Ms. Beamon hopes to meet those goals in ways that are fiscally responsible to the City and her agency, without sacrificing care to the families assisted.

TELEWORK SURVEY

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Almost no City managers prefer to come into the office five days a week. The vast majority (95%) support telework or “work from home” as an option.

WORK FROM HOME SURVEY RESULTS	
<i>What is your preference for telework/work from home?</i>	
Fully remote	14.26%
Hybrid option	73.89%
One day a week	7.41%
Every other week	1.11%
I do not support WFH	3.33%
<i>Click anywhere on box to see complete survey results</i>	

Of those managers who support telework, most would prefer (73.9%) a hybrid option, in which they can work from home a few days each week. Another 7.4% would prefer to work just one day a week in the office and 14.3% would prefer to work fully remotely.

MANAGERS ARE ALREADY OVERBURDENED

City agencies also have thousands of empty desks. The City's workforce has more than 24,000 fewer workers than usual – 8% of the positions in New York City's government are unfilled. Usually just 1% of those positions are vacant.

City managers have often had to pick up the slack because their teams are understaffed. Nearly three-fourths of managers (70.68%) have taken on more work because people are leaving their agencies, according to the MEA survey.

“When you become a manager, there is no overtime or compensation pay. You work until

you get the job done,” says MEA President Darrell Sims. “In contrast, the union employees get paid overtime and they have compensation time that they can take at a later date.”

The Mayor's requirement that workers return to the office has made it more stressful for managers already working unpaid overtime because their offices are understaffed. More than half (52.2%) of managers spend more than an hour each way commuting to and from the office, according to the MEA survey. Two-thirds of managers (67.0%) say their work-life balance has gotten “worse” or “much worse” since returning to the office.

Filling vacant staff positions is also more difficult because the new workers would have to come to the office full-time. Nearly three-quarters (74.4%) of all managers agree or strongly agree that the City's lack of a telework or work from home option makes it harder to hire people.

WORK FROM HOME SURVEY RESULTS	
<i>STATEMENT: I have taken on more work because people are leaving my agency</i>	
Strongly agree	37.66%
Agree	33.02%
Neither agree nor disagree	24.12%
Disagree	4.45%
Strongly disagree	.74%
<i>Click anywhere on box to see complete survey results</i>	

City agencies are also less effective because of the missing workers. At the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, where President Sims worked for decades, the City is challenged to meet deadlines for using federal tax credits to create new affordable housing desperately needed by the City. Project loan closings have been delayed.

There are shortages of code enforcement inspectors who inspect dwelling units in response to 311 complaints from residents of code violations. These inspections expose conditions that can be hazardous and life-threatening compromising the quality of life for residents,” says President Sims. “A lot of these inspectors have left the agency.”

City managers have also waited for years since their last pay raise. “They received nothing in 2020, nothing in 2021 and 2022,” says Mr. Sims. This means that as prices increase quickly throughout the U.S. economy, the buying power of a manager's salary continues to shrink.

NYC'S FISCAL CRISIS

As the whole U.S. economy sags towards a possible recession in 2023, New York City faces what Mayor Adams calls a “economic tsunami.”

The City has a legal obligation to contribute to pension plans that are receiving less income than usual from investments in a weak stock market. Its budgets are also strained by the rising costs of labor, healthcare and energy.

The budget crisis is making all of the other challenges faced by managers harder to solve. The City has already cut more than \$2.5 billion from its budget for fiscal years 2023 and 2024 “without service reductions or layoffs,” according to the City's November update for Fiscal Year 2023. But the City has also announced a hiring freeze and plans to save money by eliminating 50% of the vacant jobs at City agencies.

The City could also delay raises for managers as the City's budget is strained. “It is getting hectic because it is time to negotiate new contracts and they don't have the money,” says President Sims. “The city has not thought about the workforce other than mandating them to be back in the office and trying to cut our healthcare.”