



SMEA Workers Fighting for Dignity, Justice and Respect

Oct 3, 2017

Dear Somerville residents

We, the 260 members of the Somerville Municipal Employees Association, hope you will take time from your busy day to read this article. The SMEA has a long history working diligently to make Somerville a great place to live for you the residents.

We are a diversified group made up of 31 divisions. We are your School Nurses, Librarians, Department of Public Works, Traffic and Parking, City Hall, Building Custodians, Recreation, Inspectional Services, Health Department and many other departments that keep the city running efficiently.

Over the past decade our members have seen deep erosion in their wages and little or no affordable housing available to them in the City in which they were born and raised. Notwithstanding the plight of SMEA members, the City administration continues to defy a wage adjustment for our membership to address the wage erosion or the ongoing housing crisis that affects all of us. Our members have had to leave the city for other communities that they can afford. Almost half of the members of the SMEA now live outside the City of Somerville. Most new hires live outside the city.

This chart represents one of the many reasons why the SMEA finds itself 15-20% in lower wages behind comparable communities.

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010
Pay Raise	0%	0%	0%	0%
Cost of Living	2%	4%	-1%	2%

The SMEA had no other option but to take 4 years of no raises even while the cost of living rose to a moderate 7% during those years.

The administration refused to settle a contract with any back pay for those 4 years. That in and of itself has been a major setback for our members. Below average pay increases since 2010 have added to the wage gap between Somerville union workers and union workers in neighboring communities. In combination with the quadruple zero years the wages since 2010 leave Somerville workers on average 12% – 20% below where they should be.

While union wages have stagnated, in 2016 the administration conducted a pay study that gave handsome raises for the Mayor, Aldermen and other Non Union City Employees at a cost to the City of nearly 1 million dollars in FY 17 alone.

The SMEA also performed its own wage study using the same communities that the administration used in their study and discovered that we fall woefully behind in earnings.

Board of Aldermen pass a resolution June 2016 to show the same consideration of a pay raise to the SMEA that was given to the Mayor, Aldermen and Non Union workers. And the City can readily afford it. In a recent campaign speech, the Mayor proudly boasted that Somerville has “A Local Booming Economy”

Why Are Unions Treated Differently at the Bargaining Table?

Unions in Somerville are treated differently because they have contractual labor rights, including the rights to bargaining collectively over the terms and condition their employment and to enforce the terms of their contracts through a grievance procedure and the filing of unfair labor practice at the Massachusetts Department of Labor Relations (DLR). The City administration resents the City Unions and the rights they have; it would prefer to operate as a dictatorship without union involvement. That resentment lies at the heart of the City’s labor policy and explains why the SMEA and other unions have to file grievances and unfair labor practice charges at the DLR in shockingly historic numbers compared to all other Cities and Towns across Massachusetts. That resentment also explains why the City’s union members had to wait a full decade for a minimal pay raise when the economy is booming and when the City’s non-union employees have enjoyed their handsome raises. Unions should not have to go to salary arbitration and spend thousands of dollars of taxpayer dollars when the economy is booming.

Unions should not be penalized and unfairly treated because they have rights under the law. Offering a 1% raise is just another way of disrespecting the City's hardworking union workers in a booming economy.

"The All America City Indeed"

Taking the Low Road

In relation to what unions in the city have now been experiencing for many years, the administration can do one or two things. It can continue to lowball the City's Union employees in compensation, tightly control these workers, and continue its decade long history as a renowned labor scofflaw.

Or Take the High Road

Invest in its employees though higher and more competitive wages, and better health insurance coverage. Production of the workforce would rise even higher than at its current rate. City services provided to the residents and business would also increase if the city recognized that the unions and the administration are partners for the good of the people we serve. With a desperately needed improvement in morale within reach, this partnership could become a reality.

Somerville by the Numbers

- Members cannot afford to "raise a family, live, work, and play" in Somerville
 - Only 46% of SMEA members live in Somerville
- Somerville Statistics:
 - 42% of households earn \$75,000-\$200,000
 - 6.9% earn over \$200,000
 - Population: 78,595
 - FY18 Budget: \$233,065,084

City Revenue Budget FY 18

- Produced by SMEA Members: \$23,147,731
 - Excise Tax: \$6,490,038
 - Resident Parking Permits: \$2,182,793
 - Building Permits: \$9,500,000
 - Parking Fines: \$4,974,900
- Real Estate Taxes: \$142,653,205
- Unrestricted General Gov. Aid: \$25,171,000
- Payments by Tax-exempt Entities: \$1,344,840

We are informing you the residents that we are an excellent and experienced workforce that has been serving this city for many years. We are proud of our work and take great pride in the beautification the City enjoys today and will enjoy well into the future. We are more productive than ever before, our job is very demanding. We will continue to serve the city with great care, pride and respect for the residents and would appreciate your support of the SMEA in its fight for fair wages and fair labor in the city of Somerville.

We hope you will support us in any small way you can by spreading the word and possibly attending upcoming announced rallies. If you wish to let the Mayor know that the time has come for payment of fair wages and benefits to the City's union workers, he may be reached at (Mayor's e-mail mayor@somervillema.gov and phone number (617) 625-6600 ext 2100).

"In Unity There is Strength"

SMEA Leadership Executive Board and its Officers

Ed Halloran President

James Roderick Vice President