



May 2022

UNION NEWS!

Newsletter of the Charlotte City Workers Union, chapter of UE Local 150

<http://UE150.org>

Charlotte City Workers Struggle for LIVING WAGES & RESPECT!



Pictured above: Charlotte City Workers Union occupies street before March 28 City Council meeting

"When city workers are under attack what do we do? Stand up fight back!" chanted city workers as they marched in the streets, and occupied a downtown intersection before the City Council Budget Hearing in Charlotte, NC on March 28.

The Charlotte City Workers Union chapter of UE Local 150 has been organizing a campaign to seriously raise the wages this year for city employees. An action on February 28 was attended by over a hundred city workers, including bus operators in SMART union, responding to the recent on-the-job shooting murder of Ethan Rivera, a young bus driver. UE150 members also called the name of Robert Taylor, a sanitation worker killed on the job by a motorist last year.

In back-to-back actions two months in a row, city workers and other community and labor allies packed the City Hall chambers demanding changes and raises

during the deliberations for the FY2023 City budget. The union is demanding the city bring up wages by 10% to account for drastic inflation. Workers are also requesting paid daily overtime, shift differential pay and a universal sick leave policy.

A single worker needs to earn at least \$62,122 per year to raise even a single child in the city, according to the Economic Policy Institute. Currently, 75% can't afford that. In the Solid Waste, the lowest paid department, 97% cannot afford it.

"City Council needs to pass a budget that enables city workers to support our families and afford to live inside this city," stated **Dominic Harris**, President, Charlotte City Workers Union chapter of UE Local 150, Crew Leader in the Water Department.

(continued on page 2)



Pictured above: Charlotte City Workers Union rally at February 28 City Council meeting

After rallying on March 28 in Marshall Park and speaking to the news media, city workers, community allies and faith leaders marched in the streets to the Government Center, where they occupied a street intersection. Afterwards, they went inside to hear from eight city worker UE members that signed up to speak inside the city council meeting.

"We work hard to take care of the city, all we ask is for the city to take care of us," stated **Rory Pegram**, Solid Waste Services laborer and member of UE Local 150. Pegram continued, "People come in from out of town and they say this city looks great. I get compliments but I go home sad because I cannot afford to live in Charlotte. I am tired of just surviving, I want to live. I am struggling." Pegram, who cannot afford rent, is currently living out of a hotel and paying week-to-week and has to work a second job to pay his bills, like many other full time city employees.

It's About More than Wages

The union's fight is about more than just wages. City workers across many departments have reported harassment and unsafe working conditions. Particularly bad is the Solid Waste Services where many women have reported sexual harassment only to have it swept under the rug, or worse, management creating a climate where workers feel they can get away with unwarranted touching and verbal harassment.

"We are dealing with harassment in the workplace. We are being joked and acted upon," stated **Shaequontia Gaddy**, UE150 union member and Senior Equipment Operator in Solid Waste Services. Gaddy continued, "We are spoken to inappropriately. We are not judged based on character. We are being sexually, verbally, mentally and emotionally abused. We are bullied and disrespected based on our gender, sex and identity change."

At a recent union meeting, workers vowed to stand in solidarity with the women in Solid Waste Services to end the harassment.

Workers in Solid Waste have been joining the union in big numbers recently. Eight workers recently signed up to go through the UE steward training program to help strengthen the union.

City workers across North Carolina and Virginia are organizing as part of the Southern Workers Justice Campaign. On March 26, workers from across NC were invited to a statewide summit to share lessons, budget proposals and discuss how to better implement the UE Resolution against racism that calls on municipal workers to organize to reallocate funds from overfunded police departments. Municipal workers across both states have been rallying and speaking up at budget hearings to fight for raises and collective bargaining rights.

Charlotte City Workers Union Members Speak-Out at City Council Meetings!



I am struggling...

"We work hard to take care of the city, all we ask is for the city to take care of us. People come in from out of town and they say this city looks great. I get compliments but I go home sad because I cannot afford to live in Charlotte. I am tired of just surviving, I want to live. I am struggling."

Rory Pegram, Solid Waste Services, Yardwaste Laborer



I am proud...

"As a city employee I am proud to be part of the progress for myself and my fellow union members. For the grace of God, today is a new day."

Sonia Watts, Special Transportation Services, Operator



Union jobs are better...

"It is common knowledge that union paying jobs are better than non-union paying jobs. That will also go further in impressing a new employee. Part of orientation is where you learn about benefits, and I do not know a benefit better than being in a union. UE150 is not going anywhere!"

Derrick Davis, Water Department, Utility Tech 1



We are dealing with harassment...

"We are dealing with harassment in the workplace. We are being joked and acted upon. We are spoken to inappropriately. We are not judged based on character. We are being sexually, verbally, mentally and emotionally abused. We are bullied and disrespected based on our gender, sex and identity change."

Shaequontia Gaddy, Senior Equipment Operator, Solid Waste Services



We need respect, we need higher pay...

"75% of the workers cannot afford to live in the city that they work in and raise our children in. Solid Waste don't sleep. 24 hours a day we are running. We need our respect, we need those wages, we need higher pay to support our families. We lost a co-worker in the line of duty that we do, it is dangerous out there. Snow, rain, 30 degrees, 100 degrees we are out there cleaning the city."

Antoquie "Jeremy" Forney, Solid Waste Services



We perserved & endured a pandemic...

"We perserved and endured a pandemic. I had it twice. But when I had to come to work, and was able, I was there. These worker are worth their weight in gold and are worth everything you can give them."

Craig Brown, Crew Leader, Water Department, UE150 Chief Steward

Union Stewards -- the Backbone of the Union -- Elected and Being Trained!



Pictured above: Charlotte City Workers Union steward training on April 14.

The key to a strong union, is a strong steward system.

Stewards are the front line eyes and ears of the union, and its backbone too! Stewards help listen to workers everyday concerns. Stewards study policy and state laws to know how to support co-workers in need. Stewards are constantly updating members about union activities. Stewards join workers to stand up to the boss when injustices are done.

For every supervisor, we need at least one strong steward. If management is meeting all the time to plan our work. If they are the only ones keeping documentation, then we are never going to be able to win fairness. We have to be just as organized as management to change workplace culture. We can do it! The union has the tools. We just need your involvement!

At the Solid Waste UE150 Union meeting on March 26 seven new stewards were elected, and Wilford Thomas was affirmed as department Chief Steward

We elected the following SWSstewards:

Wilford Thomas, SWS Chief Steward
Kevin Carr, Yard Waste Steward
Rory Pegram, CBD Steward
Deddrick Davidson, Street Sweep Steward
Cody Hart, Tech
Shaequontia "DD" Gaddy, Automation Steward
Antonique Forney, Bulky Steward
Kenny Alford, Automation Steward

The Union is in the process of recruiting and training up new stewards in every department. **THIS MEANS YOU! if you are interested, please call Chief Steward: Craig Brown, 704-390-2365**

Contact UE150 Charlotte City Worker Union Leaders

President: Dominic Harris, 704-954-9647

Chief Steward: Craig Brown, 704-390-2365

**Recording Secretary: Nichel Dunlap Thompson,
704-890-7631**

Organizer, Kass Ottley, 704-576-0010

Dante Strobino, UE Int'l Representative at 919-539-2051

website: UE150.org

email: organizeUE150@ueunion.org