

OPEN SHOP GAZETTE

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The following article appeared in the Sunday, August 20, 2017 edition of *The Orange County Register* and was written by Jessica Kwong.

“City council members on Tuesday night gave a unanimous nod to Orange County’s first citywide project labor agreement, establishing local hire requirements for construction projects funded by Santa Ana.

The community workforce agreement with the Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council and the Signatory Craft Councils and Unions applies to city multi-trade construction contracts exceeding \$250,000 and specialty contracts over \$100,000 limited to a single trade or scope of work.

Santa Ana’s five year agreement sets a goal for 30 percent of the total work hours to be performed by workers residing in Santa Ana, and veterans regardless of where they live.

“This is, as mentioned before, the first citywide project labor agreement in Orange County” Councilman Jose Solorio said. “It is historic”.

Under the agreement, apprentices may represent up to 30 percent of each crafts workforce.

“It provides for opportunities for young people here in Santa Ana that choose not to go to college but choose to work with their brain and their hands,” said Ernesto Medrano, the council’s representative for Orange County. He said apprentices can acquire journey-level experience and earn more than \$60,000 a year.

The agreement also provides for binding arbitration of grievances. For projects covered under the agreement, “Unions agree that they shall not incite or encourage, condone or participate in any strike, walkout, slow-down, picketing, observing picket lines,” a city staff report states.

Council members on Tuesday adopted a resolution amending the city’s budget to add a contract administrator position with a salary of \$89,231 plus benefits for the remainder of fiscal year 2017–18.

The agreement may increase the cost of projects exceeding \$100,000 by 10 to 20 percent, and by an undetermined amount for costlier ones, according to the staff report.

“Even if there was an additional cost, I think it’s offset by the benefit that this brings to our community with jobs, with employment, people spending money, keeping the dollars local,” Councilman Vicente Sarmiento said.

The agreement was “long overdue,” said Mayor Pro Tem Michele Martinez, who worked on it for at least a decade.

“As we deal with a housing crisis here in Orange County, these are the kinds of jobs we need,” she said.

After voicing his support for the agreement, Medrano asked dozens of trade members in the council chambers to stand.

“These are the individuals who are ready to go to work to rebuild Santa Ana, so go ahead and bring all the capital improvements,” he said. “We’re ready to go, to don our work boots, our hard hats and our tool belts.”

Approval of the agreement was met with applause.”

The following story was reported by *ENR* and is a story that was carried in the *Seattle Times* on August 17.

“The work stoppage has halted some concrete deliveries for nearly a week as developers rush to take advantage of the prime summer construction season.

In the core of Seattle alone, there are 74 major construction projects under way now, with others spread out around the region.

The ready-mix concrete trucks, with their spinning, cylindrical drums, are a staple at construction jobs.

But the 300 Teamsters members who drive the concrete trucks in King County have been working without a contract with five local cement companies since the beginning of August.

Drivers for one of the concrete suppliers, CalPortland, walked off the job last Friday. Following a meeting for union workers Wednesday, Teamsters spokeswoman Jamie Fleming said there is a “pretty high likelihood” that the workers for the other four companies will begin striking soon as well, barring a sudden turnaround in negotiations.

CalPortland said in a statement on its website that the walkout has already left “dozens of projects in jeopardy,” and caused “untold financial damages.” It said the drivers “simply abandoned” their trucks filled with perishable concrete at plants when the walkout began on Friday morning, posing the potential to damage the trucks if they weren’t unloaded while the concrete could be moved.

“Several CalPortland customers sustained damages because of project (concrete) pours that were started and then abandoned, left unfinished, due to this deplorable action,” CalPortland said in another statement, released Wednesday.

It’s unclear which construction projects have been affected. CalPortland didn’t respond to questions, and the union said it isn’t sure. Representatives for several local developers and builder groups either did not know or did not respond to questions.

CalPortland drivers make up about 28 percent of the union concrete truck drivers in King County.

The companies involved in the negotiations are California-based CalPortland, Seattle’s Salmon Bay Sand & Gravel, Renton-based Stoneway, and Lehigh Cement and Redmond-based Cadman, both owned by the Texas company Lehigh Hanson.

The Union members voted to authorize a strike against the companies a few weeks ago. But the union decided first to

picket just CalPortland, which Fleming described as the “spokesmen” for all the companies and the one giving the union the most trouble in negotiations.

Union workers have set up 24-hour picket lines at CalPortland facilities in South Seattle, Kenmore and Snoqualmie.

Any decision to strike against the other four cement suppliers would be made by union leadership, and a strike could begin without further notice, she said.

As is often the case in closed-door labor negotiations, the sticking points are unclear: The union says it’s upset that the companies aren’t bargaining in good faith. CalPortland says the union proposals are economically unsustainable.

The average driver now makes about \$31 an hour, according to the union.

CalPortland said it has offered a 12 percent pay and benefits increase over three years. The union declined to release its proposal.

The companies and the Teamsters have been meeting with a mediator---together and separately---with the most recent talks taking place Tuesday. Both sides said the talks this week did not go well.

Construction worker strikes happen occasionally in the Seattle area. A year ago, some projects were briefly slowed when window installers walked off the job. During the last construction boom a decade ago, strikes by fire-sprinkler installers and a different union representing concrete workers also halted projects.”

