

# Chapter Leadership Guide



**The State Employees' Association of New Hampshire**  
***SEIU Local 1984***

[www.seiu1984.org](http://www.seiu1984.org)

## Introduction: Stronger Together

Our union is a large organization. This gives us an enormous amount of potential strength – we are thousands and thousands of working people in the state, county, municipal, and private sector, united in a single union.

But our real strength comes from how well we organize and mobilize those thousands of members. For us to achieve our goals, we must do much more than simply *be* members; we must be active members who communicate, educate, and mobilize.

This is a big part of why we have union chapters. Chapters enable communication to flow, they enable members to come together for information and education, and it is through the chapters that members have a voice in steering our democratically-run labor organization.

Chapters are much more than a monthly meeting, or a place to vote on something. Chapters are the infrastructure of our union – the stronger our chapters are, the stronger we all are as a union. There is no way around that. The strength of our union is not based on a few elected leaders or a group of staff people. The strength of our union is directly based on the involvement of the members, and that involvement is born in the chapters.

As a chapter leader, you take on an important responsibility. You have some specific duties, which are outlined in this booklet. For example, if you are chapter president, you preside over meetings. If you are a chapter councilor, you vote at council meetings.

But there is more than that. You play a role which cannot be easily condensed into a list of duties – you have a responsibility for communication, education, and mobilization. The members of your chapter will look to you for information, and other elected union leaders will call upon you to help move people to action. And you will need to constantly work to identify and develop the next generation of union leaders. This is what being in a union is all about.

Together, with every person doing their part, we will continue to build a stronger union. And we will win the important fights – for good contracts, responsible budgets, quality services, and for the well-being of all working families.

# Chapters in Our Union

Every member of the SEA is a member of one of our chapters. Some chapters are based on bargaining unit, some are based on state agency boundaries, some are based on job classification, and some are simply based on geographic region.

Every chapter elects officers – such as a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. Also elected are chapter councilors, who serve a number of important functions. Each chapter is entitled to elect a councilor for every twenty chapter members.

It is through the activities of the chapter and by attending chapter meetings that most members get involved in the union. Members look to their chapter meetings as a source of important information, a place where they can have their say, and a place to go and socialize with fellow union members.

## **CONVENTION**

The chief governing body of the SEA is the **annual convention**. The convention is held every autumn, between October 1<sup>st</sup> and November 15<sup>th</sup>. It is here that the direction of the organization is determined by democratic process. Delegates vote on such things as: changes to the union's Constitution, dues, election of union officers, our political agenda, and all large policy decisions.

Who attends and votes at the annual convention? **Every chapter sends a delegation, made up of the chapter president and chapter councilors.** With each councilor representing twenty chapter members, the convention is in reality our union legislature. The union's officers and Board of Directors, who are elected at the convention, are also delegates to the convention.

## **COUNCIL**

Between annual conventions, the same body meets quarterly as a **council**, in September, December, March and June. These quarterly council meetings carry on the business of the union as does the annual convention, but do not have the power to change dues, make constitutional changes, or override the decisions of the convention.

## **UNION DEMOCRACY AND STRENGTH**

Our chapter structure is the mechanism by which **individual members** can have their voices heard through their representatives – their councilors. Their opinions on matters such as who should be SEA president, and on how much dues should be, are carried forward by their elected chapter councilors.

At the most basic level, the chapters are a key element in communication and building strength in our union. During contract negotiations, important legislative battles, or any of the other important things we work on, the chapter structure is how members **learn what is going on, have their say, and are mobilized to take action.**

# Union Structure

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Meets monthly to run the regular business of the union, and is the executive body of the union between Conventions. Board members are elected at the Convention.

## OFFICERS

Oversee the daily goings-on of the union. The officers are the President, First and Second Vice Presidents, Treasurer, and Secretary. The Officers are elected every two years at the Convention.



## THE CONVENTION

The Convention meets annually and is the highest decision-making body in the union. Chapter Councilors and Chapter Presidents attend and vote at Convention, as do the Officers and Board of Directors.



## THE COUNCIL

The Council meets four times per year, and is the highest legislative body of the union aside from the Convention. Every chapter is represented at the Council.



## CHAPTERS

Every member is a part of a union chapter. Chapters have meetings, elect chapter officers, and elect councilors to represent the chapter at the Council and the Convention.



## THE MEMBERS

A union is not an insurance policy, or a small group of paid staff. A union is a unified group of people. The members are the union.

# Basic Questions About SEA, SEIU Local 1984



## **"What is SEIU Local 1984?"**

We are a labor union, made up of the state workforce in New Hampshire, as well as a significant number of county, municipal, and private employees. We have over six thousand members in every city, town, and village in the state. In 1984, we became a part of SEIU, and that is why, as a unified whole, we are SEIU Local 1984.



## **"What is SEIU?"**

SEIU is the Service Employees' International Union, the largest labor union in North America. Across the USA and Canada, SEIU represents public employees, health care workers, service workers, professionals, and numerous other types of employees. There are SEIU members just like us all across the country, and by standing together we can learn from each other and advance the interests of all.



## **"I thought we were the SEA."**

The foundation of our union is the State Employees' Association of New Hampshire (SEA), which was founded in 1940. As time passed, groups of people who were not state employees came into the union -- county employees, municipal employees, and private sector employees. Many people still refer to the union as the SEA, even though many of our members are not state employees.

# Who Does What in SEA, SEIU Local 1984

**President.** The President is elected from among the members, but upon election he/she becomes a full-time employee of the union. He/she is the highest administrative authority of the union.

**First Vice President.** Stands in for the President in his/her absence. The First Vice President is also chair of the Convention Arrangements Committee.

**Second Vice President.** Chairs the Organization Committee and the Grievance Committee. Also assists the First Vice President.

**Treasurer.** Takes charge of all monies and property of the union.

**Secretary.** Keeps the records of all official proceedings.

**Directors.** The union's Board of Directors are members elected to oversee the business of the union between Conventions. They meet monthly. They are also voting members of the Council and the Convention.

**Chapter Officers.** Each chapter of the union elects its own officers in accordance with their chapter by-laws. Typically these officers include a President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. These officers preside over the affairs of their chapter. Chapter Presidents also represent the chapter at Council meetings and the Convention.

**Councilors.** Elected by the chapters at a ratio of one councilor for every twenty members. They represent their chapter at Council meetings and the Convention.

**Stewards.** Workplace representatives of the union. Stewards answer questions, solve problems, and recruit new members.

**Staff.** The union hires staff to carry out the affairs of the union and to ensure effective representation of members. Staff are hired with the approval of the Board of Directors, and are supervised by the President.

# Union Committees

**Collective Bargaining Advisory Committee.** Studies, prepares and initiates all union policies and programs relative to collective bargaining.

**Constitution and By-Laws Committee.** Studies and makes recommendations in regard to the union Constitution and all chapter by-laws.

**Convention Arrangements Committee.** Makes arrangements for accommodations and program planning for the annual Convention.

**Ethics Committee.** Reviews and oversees the union's Code of Ethics.

**Financial Advisory Committee.** Prepares the annual budget.

**Honorary Membership Committee.** Reviews all persons recommended for honorary membership in the union.

**Lavender Caucus.** Works to mobilize mutual support between organized labor and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

**Member Benefits Committee.** Maintains all member-benefit programs.

**Operation Santa Claus Committee.** Coordinates the union's fund raising efforts at Christmas time for needy children throughout the state.

**Organization Committee.** Studies, prepares and carries out such activities as will build up the membership of the union. Responsible for all aspects of chapter formation, dissolution, and constitutional chapter meeting requirements.

**Political Education Committee.** Studies, prepares and initiates the political education and political action programs of the union.

**Resolutions Committee.** Studies all resolutions presented to the convention.

**Retirement Committee.** Studies retirement laws of this state and such other matters affecting these laws.

**Social Activities Committee.** Develops the social activities of the union.

**Steward Committee.** Coordinates and plans steward training.

As chapter president, you have to **make sure your chapter is functioning properly**. Are your councilors getting information out to their assigned members when asked? Are your stewards properly trained? Are people notified when you have chapter meetings? This all falls to you.

Of course, you will have help. The union's officers and staff are available to assist with these things, and to provide ideas and feedback. Do your councilors need training? We can help. Is your communication system breaking down somewhere? We can help. Nobody in our union struggles alone.

You should also seek to **delegate responsibilities** to others in your chapter – your fellow elected officers, your stewards, and even your active members who do not hold any official position. These are the people who you want to work with, to grow them into the chapter leaders of the future.

At the most basic level, the **duties of the chapter president** are:

1. Preside at all meetings of the chapter and its board of directors / executive committee.
2. Hold at least four chapter meetings every year.
3. Appoint standing committees provided by the chapter's by-laws, and oversee their work.
4. Appoint and oversee the work of special committees, and serve as an ex-officio member of each. When a committee's purpose has been fulfilled, dissolve it.
5. Review the performance of all chapter officers to coordinate their activities and ensure that their duties are fulfilled. Ensure the education of all officers and councilors as to their responsibilities and functions. They will turn to you for help when they encounter any problems – you are their leader.
6. Serve as a member of the Council, as well as a delegate to the Annual Convention.
7. Coordinate, on the chapter level, the activities and the programs of the union.
8. You will receive a quarterly membership roster from union office. This information should be reviewed and any corrections forwarded to the office.
9. Study the programs, policies and activities of the union so that the activities and objectives of your chapter complement those on the statewide level.
10. Nominate union stewards for appointment by the SEA president.

## ***Your Vice President***

Your chapter vice president probably thinks their job is just to preside over chapter meetings when you cannot be there.

The job could and should be much more than that. Utilize your vice president in ways that prevent you from taking all the weight on your own shoulders. For example, put your vice president in charge of arranging a guest speaker for a meeting. Appoint your vice president to chair the chapter membership/organizing committee. Find roles for your vice president that strengthen the union in your chapter.

Your chapter bylaws may list some specific duties of the vice president.



## Tips for Running Effective Meetings

1. **Plan ahead**, and give members plenty of notice about the meeting.
2. Choose a reasonable meeting **location**. Make it as convenient as possible for the largest number of members.
3. Start and end **on time**. Nobody wants to go to a meeting that starts 20 minutes late and ends even later. People are more likely to attend when they know meeting times are reliable.
4. Let people **have their say**, but try not to let people ramble, and don't let one person monopolize discussion. Be firm without being nasty, and stick to the agenda.
5. People don't come to hear you talk. **Facilitate** the meeting but don't do all the talking.
6. Make sure **important decisions** are made at chapter meetings. People will be more likely to attend if important things are happening.
7. **Make meetings interesting** by inviting guest speakers for short presentations, or arrange for short training workshops during the meeting.
8. **Delegate and assign tasks** to members. Don't just ask for volunteers, because you will probably sit in silence. Ask people to do things which have value but are manageable based on your knowledge of their skills and strengths. Follow up with these projects at future meetings.
9. Increase attendance by having councilors **remind members** a day or two before the meeting.



### Chapter President's Equipment:

**Gavel.** This will help you keep meetings in order.

**Timepiece.** It is good to start and end meetings on time.

**SEA Constitution.** It is important to know this document.

**Your chapter's bylaws.** Every chapter has bylaws, and they should be followed.

**Parliamentary procedure guide.** Robert's Rules of Order are an important guideline for running effective meetings. Shorter versions in pamphlet and booklet form are also available.

## Thinking About Stewards

Members become stewards by one of two ways:

1. Election, or
2. Nomination by chapter president for appointment by SEA president.

**Election.** Typically a chapter should hold a steward election if there is a vacant steward position and more than one person is interested in being a steward. In some units, the number of stewards may be defined by the collective bargaining agreement.



A chapter may also choose to hold regular steward elections that coincide with their chapter elections. While regular steward elections are not required, they are generally a good idea because they keep stewards accountable to the members they represent.

For more information or assistance with arranging a steward election, contact your field representative or the union's education coordinator.

**Nomination.** When a steward position is vacant, the chapter president can choose to nominate a replacement. This is done by notifying the SEA president of the nomination (include the steward's name, work location, and a phone number at which members can contact the new steward). The SEA president can then appoint the steward and the employer will be notified. The union's education coordinator will arrange then training for the new steward.



There are some very important **things to consider** when nominating a new steward. Stewards are the representatives of the union in the workplace, and perform a job that requires the respect of the employees as well as management.

For more information on the job of the steward, see the union's *Stewards' Handbook* or visit the union's web site, [www.seiu1984.org](http://www.seiu1984.org).

**Nominate people who have the following qualities:**

1. Employees **respect** them. Perhaps people already see them as someone to go to for help.
2. They exhibit **leadership** in the workplace.
3. Management respects them. They have **credibility**.
4. They would **seek to help** all employees, not just pursue solutions to their own personal work issues.
5. They would **devote time** to the job and would attend steward training.

## Administering Chapter Elections

Chapter elections are to be completed by the end of April each year.

The union's policies and procedures for chapter elections were created to bring us into compliance with the federal Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA).

Among other things, the LMRDA requires advance notice of elections, secret ballots, and requires that every member have the opportunity to vote.

The process can seem burdensome, but it helps us comply with the law and gives all members a better opportunity to participate in running their union.

Exact dates will vary from year to year, but here is a rough outline of the process:

**In January**, Chapter presidents should name their nominations committees. The committee should start talking to members about upcoming elections and who may or may not be interested in running for chapter office. The people on this nominating committee cannot run for chapter office.

**Between January and March**, the union office will send each chapter the materials they need in order to conduct a mail ballot. In the meantime, a deadline for nominations will pass, and the nominations committee will then produce a printed ballot. Using the materials supplied by the union office, that ballot will be mailed to all chapter members.

**In April**, each nominations committee will make arrangements to meet at the union office in Concord to count ballots and prepare an election report for the chapter. **By the end of the month**, the chapter president must hold a chapter meeting at which the election report is reviewed and voted upon. Minutes of this meeting must then be sent to the union office for the process to be considered complete.



**If you find this process too cumbersome, you might consider trying to amend your chapter bylaws so that elections are held every two years. Please be sure to follow proper procedure for amending your chapter bylaws.**

The treasurer is the key financial person in the chapter. The treasurer shall be in charge of all chapter funds and responsible for the chapter's treasury, should the chapter decide to keep one (many chapters opt for the SEA office to hold their treasury).

Chapter "rebates" are described in the SEA Constitution, Article IV, Section 1 (b),

The dues of the Association shall be determined by the Annual Convention. Each chapter will be credited on a quarterly basis based on its membership at the end of the quarter. Chapters with 50 or fewer members will annually be credited a total of \$100, and for each additional 50 members an additional \$50 to a maximum of \$450 annually, accumulatively not to exceed \$1,000. These funds will be held in a special account by the SEA central office. Chapter treasurers, with written authorization of their chapter president, may draw against their respective account; such draw shall be payable to the chapter treasury. Monies accumulated in excess of \$1,000 shall lapse, 50 percent to go to the Chapter Enhancement Fund and 50 percent to go to the Building Fund."

In a chapter that maintains its own accounts, typical duties of any chapter treasurer would include:

1. Receive all quarterly dues statements to his/her chapter.
2. Issue all checks and drafts against chapter funds and present them to the President or other authorized officer for counter signature. It is recommended that for the protection of all concerned, two signatures be required before chapter funds are disbursed.
3. Maintain appropriate accounting and other financial records covering the receipt and disbursement of all chapter funds.
4. Prepare financial reports for presentation to the chapter at business meetings or whenever specifically requested by the chapter president (or chapter's Executive Committee).
5. Prepare estimates and related material based on experience and records for use in drafting annual budget, if one is used. Notifies the SEA President of any dues changes in excess of those charged by the Association.



The suggested chapter by-laws, Article V, Section (c) states in part: "the chapter Board of Directors or Executive Committee shall . . . verify all bills as budgeted, prior to payment." The chapter treasurer must ensure strict adherence to this particular section. In order to ensure that no conflicts arise over a disbursement, s/he should insist that the proper action be taken before placing his/her name on the check being issued.

If the chapter opts to have its chapter treasury held by the union headquarters, the chapter treasurer's job is much easier. For every chapter meeting, the treasurer should contact the union office to verify the status of the chapter's account, including new revenues and expenditures. This forms the basis for the financial report which should be presented at the chapter meeting. Should the chapter want to spend any of its money or seek a reimbursement from its chapter treasury, the chapter treasurer should contact the union office.

## Financial Report

At all general chapter meetings and chapter executive committee meetings, the Treasurer should present a financial report. An example is provided below.

| <u>Sample Financial Report</u>                                       |         |                 |
|--|---------|-----------------|
| The State Employees' Association of New Hampshire<br>Chapter # _____ |         |                 |
| Financial Statement for Period<br>Ended May 31, 2003                 |         |                 |
| Cash in Bank May 1, 2003   |         | \$850.00        |
| <u>Operating Expenses</u>  |         |                 |
| Meeting Facilities   | \$30.00 |                 |
| Meeting Refreshments   | \$12.50 |                 |
| Postage  | \$18.00 |                 |
| Printing   | \$12.50 |                 |
| Spring Dinner  | \$75.00 |                 |
| Telephone Expense  | \$20.00 |                 |
| Misc. Expense  | \$12.00 |                 |
| Total Expenses   |         | <u>\$180.00</u> |
| Balance May 31, 2003   |         | <u>\$670.00</u> |

## Chapter Audit

Article V, Section 4 (b) of our union's Constitution states:

"The records of the Chapter Treasurer shall be audited annually in the month of April for the period ending March 30. The President of the chapter shall appoint a committee of three qualified chapter members to audit the financial records of the chapter. A written report, on forms prescribed by the Association, shall be made by this committee at the annual meeting of the chapter in April. A copy of this report signed by all three members of this committee and countersigned by the Chapter President and Treasurer shall be mailed to the President of the Association no later than seven (7) days after said meeting. The President of the Association may request the records of a Chapter Treasurer be submitted to the Board of Directors at any time for the purpose of auditing such records".

It is important to note also Article V, Section 4.d. of the Constitution, which reads:

"any chapter failing to submit their annual audit report to the Association office by July 31 of each year shall have its quarterly rebates withheld until such time as the audit report is received".

Prepare in TRIPLICATE  
Original to Headquarters SEA  
Duplicate – Chapter file  
Triplicate – Chapter Treasurer file

Form CR-1

SEA Chapter # \_\_\_\_\_

**FINANCIAL STATEMENT  
For Fiscal Year 2004**

Cash Balance as of April 1, 2003:  
Cash on Hand \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Balance in Checking Accounts \_\_\_\_\_  
Balance in Savings Accounts \_\_\_\_\_  
Balance in SEA Account \_\_\_\_\_  
Total Cash Balance as of April 1, 2003 (A+B+C+D=) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Plus: Cash Receipts During Year:  
Received in Per Capita Refunds \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Received from Contributions \_\_\_\_\_  
Other Receipts – Interest on Savings & Misc. \_\_\_\_\_  
Total Cash Receipts During Year (F+G+H=) \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Total Cash to be Accounted for (E+I=) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Less:  
Disbursements – Receipts and/or canceled checks on file \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Cash Balance as of March 31, 2004 (J minus K=) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**DISPOSITION OF CASH BALANCE**

Cash on Hand as of March 31, 2004 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Balance in Checking Accounts as of March 31, 2004 \_\_\_\_\_  
Balance in Savings Accounts as of March 31, 2004 \_\_\_\_\_  
Balance in SEA Account as of March 31, 2004 \_\_\_\_\_  
Cash Balance as of March 31, 2004 (M+N+O+P=) \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (L above)

(USE THESE AMOUNTS AS BEGINNING FIGURE ON NEXT YEAR'S FINANCIAL STATEMENT)

**We, the undersigned, of SEA Chapter # \_\_\_\_\_ do hereby certify that the above Financial Statement showing Receipts, Disbursements and Cash Balance on Hand for the period concerned is a true statement to the best of our knowledge and belief.**  
**Signed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2004.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
AUDIT COMMITTEE

\_\_\_\_\_  
CHAPTER PRESIDENT

\_\_\_\_\_  
AUDIT COMMITTEE

\_\_\_\_\_  
CHAPTER TREASURER

\_\_\_\_\_  
AUDIT COMMITTEE

\_\_\_\_\_  
(See reverse side for example)

**FINANCIAL STATEMENT**  
**For Fiscal Year 200\_\_**

Cash Balance as of April 1, 200\_\_:

|   |    |                  |                  |
|---|----|------------------|------------------|
| Cash on Hand                                      | \$ | <u>    A    </u> |                  |
| Balance in Checking Accounts                      |    | <u>    B    </u> |                  |
| Balance in Savings Accounts                       |    | <u>    C    </u> |                  |
| Balance in SEA Account                            |    | <u>    D    </u> |                  |
| Total Cash Balance as of April 1, 20__ (A+B+C+D=) |    |                  | <u>    E    </u> |

Plus: Cash Receipts During Year:

|  |    |                  |                  |
|--|----|------------------|------------------|
| Received in Per Capita Refunds               | \$ | <u>    F    </u> |                  |
| Received from Contributions                  |    | <u>    G    </u> |                  |
| Other Receipts – Interest on Savings & Misc. |    | <u>    H    </u> |                  |
| Total Cash Receipts During Year (F+G+H=)     |    |                  | <u>    I    </u> |
| Total Cash to be Accounted For (E+I=)        |    |                  | <u>    J    </u> |

Less:

|   |    |                  |                  |
|---|----|------------------|------------------|
| Disbursements – Receipts and/or Canceled Checks on File | \$ | <u>    K    </u> |                  |
| Cash Balance as of March 31, 20__ (J minus K=)          |    |                  | <u>    L    </u> |

**DISPOSITION OF CASH BALANCE**

|   |    |                   |           |
|---|----|-------------------|-----------|
| Cash on Hand as of March 31, 20__                 | \$ | <u>    M    </u>  |           |
| Balance in Checking Accounts as of March 31, 20__ |    | <u>    N    </u>  |           |
| Balance in Savings Accounts as of March 31, 20__  |    | <u>    O    </u>  |           |
| Balance in SEA Account as of March 31, 20__       |    | <u>    P    </u>  |           |
| Cash Balance as of March 31, 20__ (M+N+O+P=)      | \$ | <u>          </u> | (L above) |

USE THESE AMOUNTS AS BEGINNING FIGURES ON NEXT YEAR'S FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Chapter Secretaries are important and valuable officers. You are the link between your chapter and the SEA office. As the Chapter Secretary, you have several constitutional duties:

1. Notify the President of the Association as to the time and place of chapter meetings. The SEA office can provide chapters with pre-printed cards to make notification of chapter members easier. Simply mentioning the next meeting in recorded minutes is not sufficient notification.
2. Send a copy of the meeting minutes to the President of the Association no later than seven (7) days after said meeting. It is extremely important to submit minutes of meetings. Any chapter who does not submit minutes of a quarterly meeting will have the dues rebate for that quarter withheld (Article IV, Section 1 (b) “. . . Only chapters complying with Article V, Section 5 will receive chapter rebates.”

In addition to the above constitutional duties, a chapter secretary should:

- Take notes during meetings and write up the minutes
- Distribute the minutes to chapter members
- Keep the SEA office up-to-date on chapter news
- Read and, when appropriate, answer chapter correspondence
- Update SEA's mailing lists by notifying union headquarters of changes in members' names or addresses
- Notify members of chapter meetings and other events
- Make arrangements for a substitute if you are unable to attend a meeting

## Chapter Secretary's Equipment:

Copy of the SEA Constitution

Copy of the Chapters' By-Laws

Book of parliamentary procedure endorsed by the organization (Robert's Rules of Order)

List of members

List of unfinished business (copy of which should be given to the presiding officer)

Minutes from the previous meeting



## Meeting Minutes

The minutes of an organization should contain a record of what is done. You absolutely do not have to write down everything everybody says. No editorial comment of any kind, favorable or unfavorable, should be made.

Minutes should contain:

- Date, place and time of meeting
- Name of person presiding
- Name of Secretary
- The names of those present, if possible (use a sign-in sheet for large meetings).
- The exact wording of all main motions, whether adopted or rejected. A motion which was withdrawn should not be recorded
- The names of the persons making the motions; the name of the seconder need not be recorded
- Whether each motion carried or did not carry (passed or failed)
- Points of order and appeals, whether sustained or lost



It is not necessary that minutes of the chapter meeting be typed. However, it is important that all recordings of meetings be legible to others who may wish to read them, especially to other chapter officials who may succeed you in office

Whether or not a chapter wishes to set a time limit on how long minutes are kept on file should be decided by the chapter members. It is suggested that a minimum of three (3) years be used as a guide. If you wish to recommend a longer period this certainly would be in order.

The **Chapter Meeting Report** (next page) can be used to notify the SEA office of what has taken place at your chapter meeting.



# Chapter Meeting Report

98  
Chapter Number

Delores Huerta  
President

SEA office, Concord  
Location

June 18, 2004  
Date of Meeting

Feb. 17, 2004  
Date of Previous Meeting

SAMPLE

## Meeting Summary

Meeting called to order at 5:16 PM by Pres. Huerta.

Present: B. Arnold, B. Burke, J. Carville, W. Foster, D. Martin, D. Munchnik, H. Simpson, R. Tanguay, N. Washington

Minutes from Feb. 17 read and approved.

Treasurer B. Burke reported a balance of \$231.67 with no recent activity. Report accepted.

**Old Business:** Steward vacancy at satellite office – Pres. Huerta reports that the vacancy has successfully been filled. New steward is J. Dewey, who will be attending training soon.

**New Business:** Motion (W. Foster): hold a lunch meeting at the satellite office to promote the union and introduce the new steward. Second (J. Carville). Passed.

Motion (N. Washington): spend chapter funds for pizza & drinks for this meeting.

Second (W. Foster). Passed.

Pres. Huerta reported that the SEIU Summer Labor Studies Institute was coming up in July. D. Munchnik and N. Washington expressed interest in attending.

Discussion of Summer Institute and other union education opportunities.

Meeting adjourned at 6:05 PM.

## Motions or Resolutions to Report

See above

Barbara Adams  
Signature of Secretary

June 18, 2004  
Date

The number of councilors your chapter elects is based on total chapter membership: one councilor is elected for every twenty (20) members. A remainder of 11 or more entitles the chapter to an additional councilor.

## SEA Council

The SEA Council is composed of the President of SEA, who serves as chairperson; the First Vice President; the Second Vice President; the Treasurer; The Secretary; The Immediate Past President of the Association; the Directors of the Board; Chapter Presidents; and Chapter Councilors.

By Constitution, the Council must hold meetings in the months of December, March, June and September. The Council also meets at the call of the President of the Association, or when a majority of Councilors so request.

The SEA Council is the highest legislative body of the Association, except when the Convention is in session.

As a member of the Council, it is your duty to support, interpret and carry out actions adopted at the Convention.

The Council has the authority to make binding interpretations of SEA's Constitution, although only the Convention can amend the Constitution.

It should be noted that, in the event you are unable to attend a Council meeting, it is your responsibility to secure an alternate councilor to act in your place. Please note that your choice of alternates is limited to duly-elected alternate councilors. Any Councilor who fails to attend two consecutive Council meetings and has failed to provide an alternate or request an excused absence may be given written notice of his/her removal as Councilor.

Participating in the quarterly Council meetings enables Councilors to stay up to date on the most current issues and developments in the union, to speak and vote as critical decisions are made, and to help shape the direction of the union.

## SEA Convention

The chief governing body of the SEA is the **annual convention**. The convention is held every autumn, between October 1<sup>st</sup> and November 15<sup>th</sup>. It is here that the direction of the organization is determined by democratic process.

Delegates vote on such things as: changes to the union's Constitution, dues, election of union officers, our political agenda, and all large policy decisions.

As a chapter councilor, you are your chapter's representative to the annual convention, along with your chapter president.

Attending the Convention enables councilors to participate in the most important decisions made in the union, and to meet and work with fellow union members from across the state.

## Councilors and Chapter Communications

Perhaps the most important duty of a councilor is communication. The SEA Constitution reads: "It shall be the duty of a Councilor to secure and collate the wishes of his/her chapter members relative to this Association's activities, and to voice such wishes to the Council; to report back to his/her chapter's membership the action of the Board of Directors."

The general responsibility of the SEA councilor is to represent the members of his or her chapter. Your constituency is the twenty members you represent. When the chapter system was conceived, it was done so with an eye to representative government. Just as there is a state representative for so many citizens, so there is a councilor for every 20 members in a chapter. The absolute best way to represent them is know exactly which 20 members you represent and let them know who you are.

### What to do!

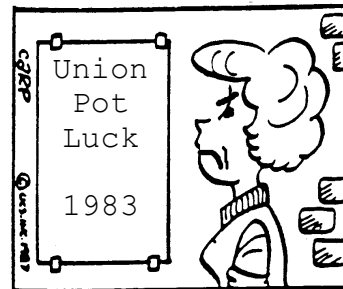
- ⇒ **Listen** to the ideas and concerns of your 20 members. In order to really represent people you must know what is on their minds.
- ⇒ **Convey those ideas through your votes** at the annual convention and at quarterly council meetings.
- ⇒ **Educate members** about what is going on with the union. You are in an important leadership position. They need to hear from you. You will learn things by faithfully attending meetings and spreading the word at your own work sites.
- ⇒ **Keep members informed and involved** by relaying information from union headquarters and union committees to the members of your chapter.
- ⇒ **Recruit new members.** This is extremely important, and it's everybody's job – not just stewards or staff people. You do it best by talking to new workers about becoming involved. You are the best recruiter because you know more, you are active, and you have a sense of commitment.
- ⇒ **Talk union.** This means you talk about the union, letting people know what they have and what has been achieved through the collective efforts of their union.

## Organizing Your Chapter For Better Communications

One of the most frequently voiced complaints in any large organization is that there is a lack of communications.

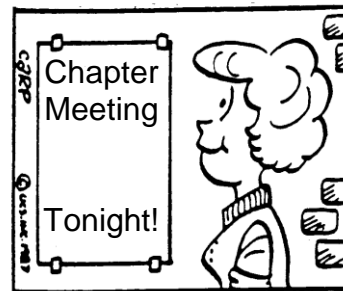
Chapters were originally formed in a way that each councilor was responsible for communicating with twenty members. This system can work if your chapter takes the time to set it up.

What are some ways in which you could organize your chapter to do this? Work with your chapter president to establish an effective member-to-member communications system for your chapter, perhaps based on a phone-tree model. **Advice and training are available from the union staff.**



The SEA contract with the state allows for the use of bulletin boards by SEA. Some chapters simply do not use this communication method to its fullest potential.

Ask yourself: Where are the SEA bulletin boards in my work area? When was the last time I or some other designated person put something on the board? Is there other unrelated material on the board that has nothing to do with SEA? When was the last time people took old material off the board?



Share this responsibility with **stewards** and keep union bulletin boards fresh and up-to-date.

The *SEA News* is published regularly for all members, but **you as a leader get many other mailings which are not sent to everybody.** You may receive additional materials ranging from court rulings to information about important legislation, special newsletters, correspondence, and more. Share this information with your members.

Simply put, **the union steward is the representative of the union in the workplace.** In this role, they are the eyes of the union, the ears of the union, and the voice of the union. While it is probably the most important job for a union member to have, it is also potentially the most enjoyable.

Union stewards wear many hats. Most obviously, it is expected that a steward will be a **problem solver.** Members will come with questions to be answered and issues to be resolved. Some of these instances might result in a phone call to the union office for the answer to a question; or, they might require meeting with management or even filing a grievance.

The union steward is a **communicator and educator.** They are the voice of the union in their work area – they should take that responsibility very seriously. They will be expected to get the word out to their members about union news, and will be expected to gather information from those same members. They must be ready to explain the actions and direction of the union in an educational manner, and help people understand the ins and outs of the contract, state and federal laws, and union policy.



Most importantly, the steward is an **organizer.** This means recruiting people to join the union, with the goal of maximizing union membership in the work area. This also means getting existing members more involved. **The number one job of the steward is to build an united, organized and involved membership in their workplace.**

You may feel that there are some similarities between councilors and stewards, particularly in the areas of communication. However, there are important differences. **The councilor represents members within the union** as a sort of legislator, who votes on their behalf *on matters of governing our organization.* **The steward, on the other hand, represents members on the job,** as a sort of police officer or even a legal worker. It is the steward who *deals with management to resolve problems, and works to involve members in solving those problems.* Accordingly, a steward receives specialized training and special legal protection not shared by councilors.

Members become stewards by one of two ways:

1. Election by their chapter, or
2. Nomination by chapter president for appointment by SEA president.

For more information on how members can become stewards, see the Chapter President section of this booklet.

The job of the steward involves much more than can be detailed here. For more information, borrow a copy of the *Stewards' Handbook* or visit the union's website at [www.seiu1984.org](http://www.seiu1984.org).

## Conclusion: See the Forest Through the Trees

We all lead very busy lives, and adding union work to it multiplies the number of things we have to know about and keep up with.

It can get very easy to get focused on the little details of our union work - because there are so many of them - and forget about our real mission. In other words, we can get too focused on the trees and forget about the forest.

The chapter president's concern for getting out a meeting notice - that is a tree.

The chapter secretary's need to type up the meeting minutes and send them to headquarters - that is a tree.

The councilor's need to work the quarterly council meeting into their schedule - that is a tree.

Even the steward's plan to file a grievance - that too is a tree.

The forest - the cumulative body of all of our trees - is our union, and our need to constantly build and strengthen it by educating our members, communicating with them, and moving them to action. It is only by doing this that we can succeed at all other things.

**For all that you do on a daily basis, don't forget that regardless of the office you hold, you must remember the forest: your number one job is to build a united, organized, and involved union membership.**

