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Local 237 Gets Okay To Sue to Block HA Work-Hours Change

By DAN ROSENBLUM Updated 17 hrs ago



GREG FLOYD: Mediation unlikely to work.

The Board of Collective Bargaining last week cleared the way for Teamsters Local 237 to sue to block a staggered-scheduling policy announced last month by the Housing Authority.

Steven E. Star, the Office of Collective Bargaining's Deputy Director and General Counsel, wrote

that during an April 7 meeting “a majority of the Board determined that there was a sufficient showing that there is reasonable cause to believe an improper practice has occurred concerning a violation of [the city’s Collective Bargaining Law] and that it appears that immediate and irreparable injury, loss or damage will result...”

Local 237 President Greg Floyd said the local aimed to file papers this week seeking an injunction in Manhattan State Supreme Court.

Would Start in May

The extended work hours—known as “FlexOps”—are scheduled to begin in May and would add two additional shifts for maintenance workers. The HA would extend the traditional normal 8-a.m.-to-4:30-p.m. weekday schedule by two hours in the morning and 3½ in the evening, as well as add Saturday shifts.

It argued that the new hours were needed to speed up repairs and allow working tenants to get them done outside normal business hours. Officials said that the agency tried to reach a good-faith agreement with the local, but that the contract ultimately allowed it to implement new shifts.

But Local 237 said the new schedules would upend its members’ lives, particularly those with child-care needs. Though the HA said it would issue safety equipment, the local questioned whether there would be adequate protection during late hours. It filed an improper-practice petition with the BCB three weeks ago and the Municipal Labor Committee, the umbrella group for city unions, wrote a brief to oppose what it called a violation of collective bargaining.

Mr. Floyd said he didn’t anticipate the HA would relent, citing a Federal Judge who in December appointed a monitor after the agency was slow to comply with an agreement to remediate mold-contaminated apartments. “You’ve defied the court system, which means that you think you’re untouchable and you could do whatever you want to do,” he said.

Nonetheless, the BCB counseled them to seek a peaceful remedy. “The Board strongly encourages the parties to engage in mediation to resolve the underlying dispute and offers the assistance of OCB in such efforts,” Mr. Star wrote.

An HA spokesman said that the Board didn’t rule on the merits of the case and that while the authority believed it was “likely to prevail in court,” it was open to more discussions.

6 Months of Meetings

“Indeed the city and NYCHA have been meeting with Local 237 seeking to resolve this matter for over six months and we stand ready to immediately commence a mediation/dispute-resolution effort in order to provide important services to NYCHA residents while meeting the safety concerns of our workers,” he said.

But Mr. Floyd said such an effort was unlikely to yield progress. “We have a contract, we had contract negotiations,” he said. “What is a mediator going to do at this point?”

The board is comprised of two members appointed by Mayor de Blasio, two by the MLC and three impartial members who are unanimously approved by both sides. (One of those seats is vacant.) The city-appointed members dissented on the grounds that the BCB’s authorization violated the civil-service law.

