

# Ithaca, N.Y. Labor Unions Making History, Uniting for Community & Workers

*City Executive Association unionizes with NYSUT, IPWC welcomes Bangs Ambulance Workers United.*

ITHACA, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, May 4, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In an unprecedented manner, organized labor continues to make history in the City of Ithaca as public workers continue to unite. Home to both Cornell University and Ithaca College, public workers are coming together as the [Ithaca Public Workers Coalition \(IPWC\)](#) with the ultimate goals of bettering their services to the community and changing their relationship with the City of Ithaca.

Several unions representing municipal workers in Ithaca have either gone without contracts, or are still without contracts, in some cases for several years. This has caused a ripple effect in the ability of workers to provide timely and quality public services to the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County. Citywide, departments still struggle to recruit and retain police officers, firefighters, DPW workers and other important administrative workers and support staff. Stress on emergency services to keep up with calls for service continues to increase. In other cases, such as at the Ithaca Wastewater Treatment Facility, important work that has historically been performed by public union workers is now being given to private contractors with no ties to Ithaca, at much greater cost to the taxpayers, due to poor recruitment and non-competitive wages.

DPW workers were recently able to settle a contract with the city which gave them increases in pay but required other concessions in reduced benefits. The City Executive Association (CEA) and the Ithaca Professional Firefighters Association (IPFFA), both working without contracts since



CEA President Jeanne Grace & Vice President Jeremy Miller

2021 and 2020 respectively, are still trying to negotiate with City Hall to bring salaries back to competitive levels, while struggling to preserve current worker benefits and protections the city is looking to diminish. The Ithaca PBA is also now back at the table, trying to stabilize their workforce and the IPD by negotiating another contract. The PBA's current collective bargaining agreement expires at the end of 2023.

In economic times marked by significant inflation and high interest rates, the struggle of Ithaca's public servants to obtain even basic cost of living wage increases has galvanized all public sector labor organizations representing city workers to come together as the IPWC. One member

organization, the City Executive Association, represents a wide range of workers, including engineers, water & wastewater plant chief operators, the fleet manager, city forester, recreation program coordinator and others. The CEA, once a loosely organized bargaining unit, [has](#)

[successfully unionized](#) and affiliated with New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) in March 2023 to protect their members and strengthen their ability to negotiate with city hall. NYSUT represents, teachers, higher education staff, bus drivers, custodians and other municipal employees. CEA President Jeanne Grace said, "While our group of employees are subject experts in a wide range of fields, none of us are negotiation or labor law experts. Affiliating with NYSUT has provided us with resources that will allow us to meet the city at the bargaining table on a much more equal footing." The spokesperson for the coalition, Thomas Condzella, said, "We're so proud of Jeanne Grace,

Jeremy Miller, and the rest of the CEA members for coming together, not just to advocate for their members, but also for Ithaca. The CEA will now fight for fair wages and benefits to ensure positions are filled, working conditions are safe, and the best possible services are being provided to our community."

Another group of workers, [Bangs Ambulance Workers United \(BAWU\)](#), was also recently



Ithaca Public Worker's Coalition Logo

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*Jeanne Grace, CEA President*

organized in response to the needs of EMS providers in the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County. As a new Civil Service Employees Association affiliated union, BAWU is now beginning contract negotiations with their employer, the Bangs Ambulance Company. Shortly after their unionization effort began, BAWU approached the public workers coalition and expressed an interest in joining.

Condzella said, "Given their important emergency service work in the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County, along with their relationship with many of our member organizations, the IPWC unanimously voted to incorporate them into the coalition. We share much common ground and were thrilled they expressed an interest in

joining us. Together we can accomplish a lot for our community, for public safety, and for our workers." According to Condzella, the efforts of the IPWC have already paid dividends. He said, "We can feel the difference, we're starting to feel valued. DPW got a contract, CEA unionized and our coalition is growing, we still have more work to do though." Condzella credits recent progress to the hard work of the coalition members, the change in the City's legal representation at the bargaining table, and the support of the New York State AFL-CIO, among many others.

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