

# Ithaca Public Workers Coalition continues activism, weighs in on Cornell financial contributions to City of Ithaca

*IPWC recognized by Tompkins County Workers Center & Midstate Council for Occupational Safety and Health for public service and commitment to union solidarity.*

ITHACA, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, September 28, 2023 /

EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Ithaca Public Workers Coalition \(IPWC\)](#) has remained

busy since their inception almost one year ago. IPWC members recently walked in solidarity with other local workers in support of [Cynthia Brock](#), the Ward 1 candidate for the Ithaca Common Council who has been endorsed by the Midstate Central

Labor Council, the regional arm of the New York State AFL-CIO. DPW workers, police officers, firefighters, pipefitters, electricians and more were seen walking throughout the City in Ward 1, wearing their trademark "Union Strong" tee shirts, going door to door, and speaking with other union members about why Cynthia Brock is labor's endorsed candidate.

The IPWC was also recently awarded the Joe Hill Award by the Tompkins County Workers Center and the Midstate Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (COSH). The award was presented for the IPWC's public service and commitment to union solidarity on September 4th at the annual Labor Day Picnic held at Stewart Park. Present to accept the award on behalf of the IPWC was Jeanne Grace, President of the recently unionized Executive Association. Grace thanked the Tompkins County Worker's Center and the Midstate COSH, and said, "The public workers coalition has shown what workers can do when they are united. Our work isn't done though, we'll continue to fight for the best wages, benefits and working conditions that attract the best and brightest to come and work for the City of Ithaca. We won't rest until we can effectively provide the services that our community relies on and deserves." Also in attendance on behalf of the IPWC was Justin Perkins (CSEA DPW), Mary Orsaio (IPBA), John Schwartz (BAWU),



IPWC Members at 2023 Labor Day Picnic.

Griselda Velado (IPFFA) and Jeremy Miller (Executive Association).

At the picnic, the newly formed CSEA affiliated union and IPWC member organization, Bangs Ambulance Workers United (BAWU), was also awarded the Chico Mendes Award for their unionizing efforts on behalf of EMS workers employed by the Bangs Ambulance Company. Matthew Sullivan, President of BAWU, accepted the award and briefly addressed the crowd of more than 350 people.

Since Labor Day, the coalition watched one of their member unions, the Ithaca Professional Firefighters Association, IAFF Local 737, secure a new labor contract with the City of Ithaca. Ithaca Firefighters had been working without

an agreement since 2020. Tom Condzella, spokesperson for the IPWC, said "There's no greater satisfaction than seeing the results of union solidarity pay off, it was great to watch the Firefighters finally strike a fair deal. No public servant should be working without a contract, let alone our Firefighters, who work on the front lines everyday with other emergency service providers to keep our community safe." Condzella attributes the deal between the IPFFA and the City to the skill of Firefighter's negotiations team and to their ability to be reasonable and flexible. The IPWC hopes to see the Ithaca Police Benevolent Association and the Executive Association also secure new labor agreements by the end of the year.

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*Thomas Condzella, IPWC Spokesperson*

Condzella also mentioned that working with the City's new negotiations team has been a positive step for public workers. Condzella commended the Ithaca Common Council for the change implemented earlier this year that removed the City Attorney from the bargaining table. He did however state that IPWC is concerned about the City Attorney's continued involvement in negotiating important side letter agreements that supplement or modify current contracts to meet the needs of the workers and the City. According to Condzella, based on the City Attorney's history with local unions and public comments made against public workers earlier this year, the IPWC is calling for the Ithaca



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Common Council to stand by their public promise and remove the City Attorney from labor related discussions altogether.

When asked about their stance on the financial contributions that Cornell University makes to the City of Ithaca, Condzella said that the IPWC believes that the agreement needs to be for a shorter duration so it can be reviewed and renegotiated more frequently. The IPWC also believes that Cornell needs to put more money on the table, an amount comparable to their peer institutions. Condzella expressed that now more than ever, local public workers feel the immense strain being



IPWC Members and other workers walked in support of Cynthia Brock for Ithaca Common Council.

put on them and the infrastructure they maintain because of increased demand for services and critically low staffing levels in City departments. He cited several examples of why increased funding from Cornell is critical such as deteriorating roadways and sidewalks, delayed snow removal, the homeless encampments, [crime on the Ithaca Commons](#) and diminished police presence. Condzella also stressed that City departments need to be properly resourced and staffed so public work is no longer outsourced to expensive private contractors. According to Condzella, the IPWC believes an agreement between Cornell and the City needs to be more balanced, taking into consideration the working people of Ithaca and the community who relies on public services, including students, visitors and commuters.

“Our community and the working class shouldn’t have to suffer because of a disagreement between the City of Ithaca and the Cornell University Administration. There has to be a resolution that both parties can agree to, that is more considerate of our community. Cornell needs to take into account who is really being affected here, it’s their own faculty, students and staff. It’s the working class in Ithaca and the greater community we serve. As a graduate of Cornell, I’m really disappointed to see that the University won’t step up and make a more significant investment in our City.”, said Condzella.

Condzella said that the IPWC has been in contact with the University, to include some members of the Cornell University Board of Trustees, to discuss the situation. He added that the IPWC remains optimistic that an agreement will be reached so that public services in the City of Ithaca won’t be disrupted or further diminished.

“The Ithaca Public Worker’s Coalition, our member organizations, and our partners in labor throughout New York State will continue to monitor the situation closely, there’s a lot on the line

here.”, said Condzella.

Thomas Condzella

Ithaca Public Workers Coalition

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