

Commissioners Approve Labor Stabilization Agreement



Representatives from the Building Trade stand with the Armstrong County Commissioners after a public meeting held last Thursday.

by Nathan Lasher

With the Commissioners' meeting room filled with plumbers, labors, sheet metal workers, carpenters, and other representatives from the Building Trade, the Armstrong County Commissioners voted to adopt a Labor Stabilization Agreement between the County and Pittsburgh Building Trade during a public meeting held Thursday afternoon.

"I'd like to thank the Commissioners for considering the approval for the stabilization agreement which will provide a lot of good jobs for the people of Armstrong County," said Building Trade Spokesperson Greg Christy. "Not only jobs, but quality training programs offered through the apprenticeship programs for the building trades."

As Christy spoke about the stabilization agreement, he expressed that there are currently roughly 1700 members of the building trades that reside within Armstrong County.

"What the agreement actually says is if it's a project that's over \$150,000 the bidders, when we put that out, need to be aware of this agreement," said Commissioner Rich Fink. "It doesn't mean they have to be signatory employers, but that they are aware of this agreement before they bid. This agreement, whether it's a signatory employer that bids or not, the agreement's the agreement, so they still have to hire the apprentices, they still have to hire the veterans, they have to honor the drug testing policy, and they have to honor all of that to bid on it. It's just about our people getting these jobs."

According to Fink, Armstrong County's unemployment rate has been fluctuating between 9 and 10 percent with the top end of that list being construction workers.

"Considering what we've been through the last couple of years, it's remarkable that the American economy is beginning to slightly recover," said Fink. "Clearly, there are still people out there who are hurting, and we know that here in Armstrong County. We must do everything we can to help them. That is where this stabilization agreement can help the entire community. We can put qualified, skilled people to work with family-sustaining wages which will lessen the

strain that low-wage workers place on our public safety net while also providing those workers with more disposable income which will ultimately benefit our small business owners like small retail stores and restaurants. This agreement will also create pathways for local citizens to gain comprehensive career training in the skills trade which can ultimately lead to those citizens creating and owning their own businesses.”

Commissioner Patricia Kirkpatrick commented on the quality of training programs run through the Building Trade.

“I do want to convey, regarding those who are employed, the 1700 people, and those with potential to become apprentices into the trades, as we have had the opportunity to view your programs, they are outstanding,” said Kirkpatrick. “I think they compare to any college or university in the nation. You have high standards of excellence, and I believe that’s really what you’re talking about in the skilled labor force. The standards that you keep, the expectations you have with your people, and guess what, Armstrong County people always rise to the occasion. I think you see that in the work that your people do.”

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