



Dear Board of Trustees,

Today we stood with our colleagues in support of our union and made our solidarity visible at the Museum; we will continue to do so tomorrow while you vote. By now, you will also have heard from many of us urging you to vote YES on voluntary recognition.

The night before your vote, we write to you again as the Organizing Committee of TAM Workers United to ensure clarity on three central issues before you vote to deny or grant us voluntary recognition tomorrow afternoon. In this letter we address:

1. What the consequences of a “No” vote would be
2. Why conflating voluntary recognition and contract negotiations is incorrect (and your concern about bargaining a contract before hiring a new Executive Director)
3. How voluntary recognition works and why it is the best path forward for us all

In our meeting with your colleagues Neel, Bernal, Addison and TAM’s HR consultant Melanie Lawson, it became clear to us that either confusion or lack of communication on these issues remained a barrier. Unfortunately, our request to attend your Board meeting tomorrow to allow a

direct dialogue with you on these and other issues was denied. Instead we hope to lend clarity here in writing to support you to vote YES on voluntary recognition tomorrow.

**First, we want to leave no doubt on how a “No” vote on voluntary recognition will be received by TAM workers and the wider community.** While we fully acknowledge the challenging position you are in without an Executive Director in place, the decision to rush forward with a “No” vote tomorrow will be understood as a union-busting action and a denial of our right to organize. In all of our public communications, while being honest about the challenges we face at TAM, we have been careful to emphasize our hope of working together with the Board and Senior Leaders in a spirit of good faith. We have also urged our broad base of labor and community supporters to maintain similar messaging. We are eager to continue this approach, but a rushed “No” vote tomorrow will force us to change our strategy. You would be voting to place the TAM Board into a sharp and potentially protracted conflict. You would be voting for escalating mobilizations of our fast-growing base of community support, including within the arts community, among elected leaders, and with the entire Pierce County and WA State Labor movement, who have clearly communicated their support for us already.

**Second, we want to make clear that a “Yes” vote for voluntary recognition does not need to trigger immediate contract negotiations.** A “Yes” vote would be understood by our union as a welcome sign of good faith, a clear decision to respect our right to organize. We would, in return, commit to a good faith approach to the negotiations process and to a reasonable timeline as to when negotiations should begin in earnest. We understand that there are unique challenges TAM faces right now, given the lack of an Executive Director, but granting us voluntary recognition does not need to wait until one is hired. Unfortunately, the Board’s rush to a vote is happening before any real space has been created to discuss what a mutually-agreed timeline for negotiations might look like, despite repeated requests on our part for more dialogue. If you do not yet feel prepared to vote “Yes” for voluntary recognition tomorrow, we would urge you to take that path of further dialogue, instead of a path of conflict, by tabling the motion rather than voting “No.”

**Third, we want to clarify what voluntary recognition is and why it’s the best path forward for us all.** Simply put, voluntary recognition is the easiest pathway to become a certified union – for both workers and employers. Once a group of workers have established through democratic dialogue a supermajority of support for forming a union, as we have done, the employer and union can enter a legal agreement for a neutral third party to verify a simple majority of support by checking how many workers have signed union authorization cards. Should the neutral third party verify the simple majority, the employer then recognizes the union as the bargaining representative for all eligible employees at the worksite. By voting “Yes” tomorrow, you would enable this process to proceed with a meeting between the Museum and union legal counsel to enter into the legal voluntary recognition agreement and begin the card-check process.

From the beginning of our union effort, we have been committed to one another to stick together and to leave no colleague behind. Our commitment to creating a wall-to-wall union at TAM, to ensure *all* our co-workers are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve, is why we are

asking for voluntary recognition rather than filing for a National Labor Relations Board election yet. A vote “Yes” to voluntary recognition is a vote to recognize all eligible TAM workers’ right to organize together, while a vote “No” is a vote to try and divide us and to undermine our ability to support one another.

There is also precedent in the cultural sector of museums and other cultural institutions entering into voluntary recognition agreements with their workers’ unions. Most recently, the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, and the Open Society Institutes in New York City and Washington, DC have all granted their workers voluntary recognition of their unions. We ask you to affirm this precedent at TAM and join the community of cultural institutions who are committed to respecting the rights of their workers.

Tomorrow, vote “Yes” to recognize our union. Vote “Yes” to respect our right to organize. Vote “Yes” to establish good faith. Vote “Yes” to enable us to move forward together to create a sustainable, vibrant TAM now and into the future.

Sincerely,  
Carrie Morton, Visitor Services Representative  
Eden Redmond, Institutional Giving Manager  
Joe Liwag, Visitor Services Representative  
Steve Rue, Lead Preparator  
TAM Workers United Organizing Committee