

GUILD LEADER

Monday, Aug. 18, 2014

Layoff effects talks With A.H. Belo begin

Negotiators for the Guild and A. H. Belo met for about two hours this morning to begin talks on how to handle the effects of the impending sale of the Journal to the parent company of GateHouse Media. The meeting was spent with each side laying out its positions. No agreements were reached.

The company representatives, Journal Vice President for Human Resources and Labor Relations Thomas McDonough and A. H. Belo Senior Vice President and Secretary Dan Blizzard, said they had no information on how many current Journal employees GateHouse would offer employment to in its version of the Providence Journal, nor could they say when those decisions would be announced.

They said A. H. Belo would offer the same severance package is has in the past, with affected employees getting 1.25 weeks of pay per year of employment, with the value of the payout capped at an amount equal to ten weeks' of the employee's pay. McDonough said no buyouts will be offered.

The Guild is proposing the company include, as it has for past layoffs, two weeks' notice pay in addition to the severance payment. The union is also seeking six months health insurance for those laid off and outplacement such as financial advice and job search assistance.

The Guild, represented by Administrator Betsy Regan, local President John Hill and Vice President Kate Levesque, also pressed to assure that health coverage would continue for all employees during the transition from A. H. Belo to GateHouse control. The two sides disagreed on whether A. H. Belo has a severance obligation to all employees or just those that GateHouse does not take on.

Blizzard said the Journal employees' defined benefit pension would remain with A. H. Belo. He and McDonough said they would get more information on what effects a sale would have on employees' 401K accounts. Belo uses Fidelity for its 401K management while GateHouse uses T. Rowe Price.

Elsewhere in the building, employee interviews with supervisors were continuing. Guild members are asked to note any conversations you have with Belo/Journal managers or GateHouse officials in the days and weeks to come, particularly on anything that is said about your job status or anyone else's, working conditions and more. It may not seem important at the time, but could be crucial information going forward. Contact the Guild office at 401-421-9466 or png1@verizon.net and let us know what was said, who said it and when.