

GUILD LEADER

On the web at www.riguild.org

Volume XVIII, Issue 6

Providence Newspaper Guild TNG-CWA Local 31041

February 23, 2007

Pension-Parking Change Approved; Members Next Vote on Merger

Pension-Parking Change Approved

Representatives of the Providence Newspaper Guild and the Providence Journal officially signed off on the pension agreement that members approved 87-to-3 Tuesday. Part of that agreement extends free parking to the remaining Guild members who do not now have it. Company officials told the Guild Wednesday that their plan is to have those parking privileges take effect by March 1.

The process involves reprogramming the security devices at the entrances to the parking lots; members will not have to do anything.

Members to Vote on Local Mergers

With the pension vote done the Guild has one more membership vote this month and that is the Feb. 28-March 1 balloting on the proposed merger with the Woonsocket and Pawtucket newspaper guilds. Like the pension deal, the merger vote will be by secret ballot, with **voting for the Providence Unit at the Guild office at 270 Westminster from Noon to 7 p.m. on Feb. 28.** Worcester Unit members will vote the next day.

The Executive Board has recommended approval of the merger.

The combined Woonsocket Call and Pawtucket Times= unions would add about 78 dues paying member to our rolls. This may seem like a big jump, but it is really more of an effort to replenish our local. With past buyouts and reductions in staff at the Providence Journal, we now have the smallest number of Providence

members in our history.

The addition of the Woonsocket and Pawtucket members will not even get us back to our pre-buyout level; it would still cushion us against potential future losses. The extra income may, might allow us to re-evaluate our finances and possibly reduce our dues rate; though that would depend on how well negotiations in Providence and Worcester go this year. There is no guarantee the merger will mean a dues cut, but it is more possible with this additional income stream.

Both of the locals are in good financial shape and will come to the merger debt-free. If the agreement is approved, the money in their treasuries will be transferred to ours, adding, we expect, \$20,000 or more to our budget. The Pawtucket and Woonsocket locals have agreed to allow us to audit their accounts to make sure all their outstanding bills have been paid.

New ownership of their papers shouldn't be an issue. Their publisher has advised the Guild that the new owners will recognize the Guild and honor the existing contracts.

Some have questioned if the addition of two more units to our local will create an undue burden on Administrator Tim Schick. This won't be a problem, mostly because Tim has been acting as their unofficial administrator for several years now, providing advice on grievances and representing them in negotiations. We know what the workload is because he is already handling most of it.

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Merge

The Woonsocket and Pawtucket locals have agreed to abide by our local=s bylaws and to pay our dues rate, which is higher than theirs and will be phased in over a year. Under the proposed merger agreement, members in Pawtucket and Woonsocket will be eligible to run for the Executive Board, but they will have no say in Providence Unit affairs, such as our grievances and contract bargaining. Likewise, Providence members will have no say in the grievances and bargaining of their units.

This merger may be new for us, but there are many locals throughout the country, like New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore-Washington, that have several newspapers represented by one local. It=s a trend the Guild=s international office has encouraged, as a way of improving bargaining strength

regionally and of preserving smaller locals by making sure they are watched over by larger, better organized ones.

Woonsocket and Pawtucket members will benefit from the assured access to our staff and resources and we will benefit as well. These guys have taken on the Journal-Register company for years. Their locals have survived and thrived despite the high turnover rates at Journal Register papers and often hostile treatment from ownership. And, despite the much lower pay scales the Journal Register paid, they were able to build up significant budget surpluses as well.

They are scrappers. They are our brothers and sisters. They have fought the same kind of battles we have. It=s time we did it in the same uniforms.