

Guild Contract Bargaining Update

Meeting #4, September 13

The Guild and Company negotiators continued discussing the contract proposals during the fourth bargaining session and made some progress towards agreement on non-economic issues but ran into some trouble when mention was made of the pension plan.

Pension Plan: Company seek to right to change benefits

The company is seeking a free hand to change or eliminate the pension plan. Guild negotiators said the union is not willing to sign away its right to bargain terms of the pension plan and that unilateral changes were unacceptable. The Guild said it would consider specific changes to the plan but they would have to be presented at the table during negotiations.

The Guild also pointed out this issue is currently pending in arbitration. In January, the company reduced the pension formula for newly hired employees. The Guild contends this is a violation of the contract. An arbitration hearing is scheduled for Oct. 2.

Business ethics policy: Possible compromise

The company has proposed that the Guild agree to the New York Times business ethics policy. The Guild suggested that instead of fighting through every paragraph in the NYT Business Ethics policy, it would be amenable to having the policy distributed if it were able to challenge any discipline meted out or the reasonableness of certain parts of the document if they ever came into question. Management said that it was open to this approach.

Journalistic ethics: Company seeks to form joint committee

The Company has also proposed discussing the New York Times code of Journalism Ethics. Currently discussion over this document are underway with the Guild at the Boston Globe. Similar discussions between the Guild and the Times in New York took several years. On Thursday, the Company suggested that the issue be taken off the negotiating table and that a joint committee of management and Guild employees study the matter.

Multiple platforms: How to deal with a changing industry

The Guild and the Company discussed changes occurring in the news media, in the context of a proposal from the company that would permit the company to assign workers to do new types of work. The Company contends that some of its reporters and photographers will need to learn new skills for a perceived integration to web-based technologies. The Guild agreed but had concerns that with the different skill sets needed training would have to be offered and stipends provided to workers who perform such

tasks as video reporting and editing. Management offered assurances that no one was being forced to do anything they weren't ready to handle and even admitted that the need for new job classifications might be appropriate.

New England Media Group Assignments: Who do you work for?

The Guild sought to clarify a company proposal that news department employees could be assigned to work for other parts of the New England Media Group (which includes the Globe and Boston.com). According to the Company, employees would still be assigned by their current managers, but could be asked to add information tailored to the other publications.

Circulation: Subcontracting

The Company has also proposed language permitting the transfer of circulation work from the T&G to other divisions of the New England Media Group. The Company is vague on how this would work or why it is necessary.

Part-time hours: Guaranteeing part-timers hours

The Guild discussed its proposal that would prohibit last minute cuts in employee hours. The Guild has also proposed restrictions on cuts in hours that would disqualify part-timers from benefits.

Emergency scheduling: Emergency or just bad planning?

The Guild is looking to be notified in any case of an emergency call-in or the change of schedule with less than 48-hour notice. This issue has arisen out of circulation employees being called in to work when proper staffing hasn't been met.