

# THE GUILD LEADER

Friday, Aug. 25, 2017

## Emerging Freelancer Worries

GateHouse representatives spelled out a troubling vision of the company's position on the use of freelancers during negotiations.

The Journal has hired a freelancer to do a multi-part series, apparently on defense contractors and the Rhode Island economy.

Unfortunately, the reporters on staff learned of this not from our managers, but from news sources they deal with. The sources named the reporter and asked if he indeed worked for the Journal. We thought no, but then asked and were told yes.

The company's position is that it seeks out freelancers for specialized subjects, such as classical music reviews, but isn't assigning stories that are on individual reporters' beats. However, should a freelancer contact the Journal with a story idea and they like it, they will run it.

Though company representatives asserted they have not used freelancers to replace developed pieces by established reporters, and haven't taken a story idea from a staff reporter and given it to a freelancer, they said they reserved the right to do it.

More than a half-dozen writers have left the Journal over the past two years. GateHouse refuses to replace them, preferring to bank those salaries in the budget to justify the bonuses management gets each year for meeting its goals; corporate goals it meets by abandoning the goal of serving the readers they so piously claim to serve.

Guild negotiators said this raises the possibility that the regular staff would be kept busy doing day-to-day stories for the paper and web while the longer prestige pieces would be awarded to cheaper freelancers.

The Guild pointed out that for reporters who haven't had a pay increase since 2008, one of the few rewards of dutifully covering a beat on a daily basis is the hope of getting to do a major series that makes use of that knowledge.

We were assured that if a reporter suggested such a 'big story' proposal, it would be considered and not turned over to a freelancer.

At least for now.

GateHouse and the Guild discussed the planned new timecard systems GateHouse is implementing. Company representatives agreed with the Guild that it would be used by employees to record their time worked and would not be used as a minute-by-minute tracker of employee activity.

Both sides also spent a considerable amount of time discussing the pending arbitration over the out-of-seniority layoffs of Karen Silva and Paul Borges, but no agreement was reached.

## COMING ATTRACTIONS

If you've been reading the Guild Reporter that is sent to your homes (there is one on the bulletin board in the break room), you may have noticed the front-page article about the Guild's nationwide mobilization campaign at GateHouse papers here in New England as well as the Midwest and in Florida.

Over the next month or so you'll be hearing more about this as we begin to speak up and take action to convince the corporation about the value of keeping its employees and treating them with fairness and respect.