



Fifty-One

December 2005

Newsletter of the Milwaukee Newspaper Guild

Where to vote

Downtown workers will vote in the Grant Library on Thursday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Absentee ballots will be provided for bureau workers and anyone who won't be around on that day. More details of the voting arrangements, and of information sessions to brief members on the details of the package, will be posted on the Guild's Web site, milwaukeeguild.org, as they become available.

Recommendations

The Guild's Bargaining Committee and the Executive Board are unanimously, but reluctantly, recommending that members vote "yes" on a package that falls short of our goals on the biggest points, although it includes many gains on other provisions.

Info Meetings

The Guild will hold informational meetings about the contract in the Deck View Conference Monday and Tuesday at noon and 6 p.m. Wednesday meetings, also at noon and 6 p.m., will be in the second-floor training room in the Sentinel building.

Amy Rinard will hold an informational session at noon Monday for the Waukesha bureau.

Tentative contract agreement reached; Guild to vote on four-year deal Thursday

- **Calls for 1.5% yearly raises**
- **Merit pool set at 1%**
- **Health care costs to rise**
- **Must be passed by Dec. 31 or else employees lose retroactive 2005 raises**

Negotiators for the Milwaukee Newspaper Guild and Journal Sentinel Inc. reached tentative agreement on a new four-year contract Dec. 8.

Guild members will vote on the deal on Thursday, Dec. 15.

The agreement calls for **across-the-board raises** of 1.5% in January of 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008, with the 2005 raise retroactive to last January; a **discretionary pay pool** of 1% in each year, with the 2005 portion only paid out as a lump-sum bonus rather than added to our paychecks; and **minimum wage scales** that would rise 2% in January of 2005 (retroactively) and 2006 and 2.5% in January of 2007 and 2008, with slightly larger increases in a few classifications.

A last-minute push by the Guild Bargaining Committee improved the deal from the informal management offer discussed at the Dec. 5 membership meeting; that offer included a 1% across-the-board raise in 2008 and would have increased

minimum scales by only 1.5% in each year.

Nonetheless, on all counts, the deal would still be a smaller wage package than in any of the previous four contracts. The pattern in recent years has been a 2% across-the-board raise, a 1.5% discretionary pool and most minimums usually increasing by 3% or more.

If the membership approves the deal, all pay raises would take effect on the first day of the pay period that includes the date the raise is officially supposed to begin.

On **health care**, perhaps the best news is that management did not prevail in its original proposal to eliminate all contractual guarantees and take complete control over our health benefits.

The current premium split, in which the company pays 83% of the standard plan premium and we pay 17%, would remain in place through March 31. Then we would move into the same split as the rest of the company, on an eight-tier system that ranges from 79%-21% (for a single employee who doesn't smoke) to 74%-26% (for a smoker's family).

For the next two plan years, starting April 1, 2007, and April 1, 2008, the only

guarantee would be that the split would be no worse than 65%-35% for a smoker's family.

Management would agree to address two issues outside the bargaining process: employee wellness and coverage for medical services when in-network providers bring in out-of-network providers (such as radiologists or anesthesiologists) not chosen by the employee.

As previously announced, **vacation** provisions also will change. Starting in 2006, all employees hired after 1994 would accrue vacation the same year they take it, while more-senior employees would continue to earn vacation the year before they take it.

To compensate the less-senior employees for vacation that otherwise would be lost in the transition from one system to the other, each of those employees would receive an extra year's worth of vacation, to be taken over the next six years, at a maximum of one extra week per year. Staffers at the four-week level would have the option of taking one of those weeks in cash, if all four weeks of time off could not be scheduled before the end of

See CONTRACT. Page 2

Contract would maintain pay for laid off employees



While management proposes smaller pay raises, company executives get large bonuses. Some of them can even afford castles.

Health Care: On April 1, 2006, the premium split would go from a 17% employee contribution to a tiered system that would have us paying between 21% and 35% of the premiums.

2011.

Staffers who leave the Journal Sentinel will not have to pay back the company for any vacation time that was taken before it was earned. Management's original proposal called for such repayments.

Here's a summary of other contract provisions:

Victories for the status quo meant keeping key provisions that management sought to eliminate or weaken, including

Job security: Workers dismissed in an economic downsizing would continue to receive two weeks of pay for every year of service, more than anyone else in the company, plus 60 days' notice or 60 days' pay, on terms better than the law requires.

Diversity: All of the contract's diversity language and protection against harassment and intimidation would remain intact.

Part-timers' vacation: All part-timers would continue to be eligible for vacation on the same schedule as full-timers.

Gains for everyone would include improvements in provisions dealing with:

Scheduling differentials: Night differential would rise from 70 cents an hour to 75 cents in 2007 and 80 cents in 2008; weekend differential would rise from 75 cents an hour to 80 cents in 2007 and 85 cents in 2008; holiday differential would rise from \$5 a shift to \$7 in 2006 and \$8 in 2008 (in addition to overtime for the entire shift); and callback pay (for sudden schedule changes) would rise from \$8 to \$9 in 2006 and

\$10 in 2008.

Diversity: The Guild and management would conduct an biennial joint review of wages by race, gender and age, and a joint committee would discuss whether to recommend changes in the pay system.

Funeral leave: Bereavement leave for the deaths of uncles and aunts would rise from two days to three days for full-timers and from one day to two days for part-timers.

Parenting leave: New employees who give birth would be eligible for the paid portion of maternity leave immediately upon hiring, instead of six months after hiring.

Job security: The Guild would receive automatic notification of all letters of reprimand.

Job postings: Management no longer would be allowed to express any preference in any way, not just through "preferred candidate" postings, for any applicant for any bargaining-unit job until all internal candidates have been interviewed. Management also would provide the Guild with an annual report on how many vacancies were filled by internal candidates and how many were filled by outside candidates. In exchange, the number of newsroom management jobs exempt from posting would rise from five to seven.

Food service: A joint Guild-management committee would recommend ways to improve cafeteria service and will monitor cafeteria hours and service and vending machine

operations.

Jurisdiction: With a few exceptions, no one would be allowed to serve more than six months in any combination of temporary, internship and probationary status without being hired as a regular employee. The number of newsroom management jobs excluded from the contract's protection would be cut from 58 to 55 by 2007. The amount of bargaining-unit work that those editors could do would be reduced.

Gains for specific groups would include improvements for:

Part-timers: Minimum wages would rise from 80% to 90% of the full-time hourly minimum for part-time journalists with one to two years of service and part-time non-journalists with one to three years of service. Part-timers with at least five years of service could be reimbursed for up to 50% of the cost of educational courses. Part-timers would be entitled to the same orientation and in-house training as full-timers.

Non-journalists: The Messenger classification would be abolished and merged into the higher-paid Clerk classification. Minimum wage scales for experienced News Information Center employees and Technical Specialists would rise by slightly more than other job classifications. The definition of Senior Editorial Assistant and the process for advancement to that level

See POST, Page 3

Post-2006 employees to lose fifth week of vacation

The company's initial proposal included:

- Total company control of health care
- No notice for economic layoffs
- No years-of-service pay for layoffs
- 1% annual raises
- Zero increases in salary minimums

would be clarified. The biennial wage study would examine if non-journalists are receiving their fair share of discretionary raises.

Copy editors, page designers and picture editors: In 2008, production differential would rise from 65 to 70 cents an hour.

Online producers and designers: The JS Online staff would become eligible for production differential of 65 cents an hour, effective upon signing, rising to 70 cents in 2008.

Staffers who fill in for editors: Substitution pay (for filling in for editors outside the bargaining unit) would rise from \$15 to \$20 a shift in 2006. Management would agree not to force people to fill in for bargaining-unit editors if alternatives are available.

New bargaining-unit members: The contract would eliminate provisions that exclude new hires from the first across-the-board raise if they received a discretionary raise in their first seven months, and that allow the company to deny discretionary raises to highly paid employees who transfer into the bargaining unit. Across-the-board raises would be paid to all bargaining-unit members on the payroll the previous Oct. 1, instead of the current cutoff date of Aug. 1.

Bargaining-unit editors: Senior Journalist status would be extended to the online production and sports coordinators, and to a new assistant graphics editor when the graphics coordinator position is next vacant. Cash overtime would

be guaranteed for the food editor, effective upon signing, and the Entree editor, effective in 2008.

Tradeoffs

Tradeoffs would come mainly in areas where management sought to bring our contract into line with policies elsewhere in the company. Aside from wages and health care, they include:

Vacation for new hires: Employees hired from 2006 on would never be eligible for five weeks of vacation, a benefit that current employees earn after 20 years of service. It is not clear how many new employees would be likely to stay here for 20 years. This was a direct exchange for maintaining current job security provisions on severance and notice pay, which the company had sought to weaken.

Vacation payout at retirement: Starting in 2006, veteran employees who "bank" all or some of their fifth weeks of vacation until they leave the company would receive payment for those weeks at the rate in effect when the vacation was earned, not at the rate in effect at the time of termination. The financial impact would vary among employees but apparently would not be a major factor for most people. This was part of a package that allowed us to improve funeral leave, parenting leave and jury duty leave.

Tuition reimbursement: For full-timers, the reimbursement for taking educational courses would be cut from 100% to 75%,

with the same maximum reimbursement levels (\$3,000 for undergraduate courses, \$4,000 for graduate courses) as before. This benefit is used by only two or three newsroom employees a year. This was part of a package that allowed us to preserve pension benefits, raise minimum pay rates and win reimbursement at the 50% level for veteran part-timers.

Minor or technical changes or updates in provisions dealing with the 401(k) plan; mileage; republication rights; evaluations; Senior Journalist status; workplace safety and health; employee records; MKE; temporary employees; interns; contract renewal; payroll information; and Guild bulletin boards.

No changes in provisions dealing with economic downsizing; probation periods; severance pay; sale of the company; protection against discrimination and harassment; protection against pay cuts; work day and work week; overtime and comp time definitions; holiday work; vacation scheduling; sick leave; family medical emergency leaves; leaves of absence; military leaves; general expenses; pensions; other benefits; transfers; ethics; drug and alcohol testing; training; parking and commuting; bylines and corrections; columnist definition; new equipment; banning strikes and lockouts; grievance procedures; union membership; unpaid Guild leaves; Guild-management meetings; and management rights.

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Newspaper Guild**

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Leadership

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Jennie Tunkieicz

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Steward Leaders

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Mark Johnson

Jeff Maillet

Jerry Ziegler

Committees

Bargaining

Chair: Jennie Tunkieicz

Vice Chair: Larry Sandler

Grievance & Representation

Chair: Greg Pearson

Communications

Chair: Larry Sandler

Fifty-One Editor: Reid Epstein

Webmaster: Mandy Jenkins

Tech Coordinator: Dave Kirner

Fifty-One Staff: Steven Potter

Membership & Mobilizing

Chair: Graeme Zielinski

Health & Safety

Chair: Susanne Rust

Human Rights

Chair: Linda Spice

Social

Chair: Vikki Ortiz

Guild 2005-06 Steward System

If you work in:

Business News

Your steward is:

Michele Derus
or Rick Romell

Your steward leader is:

Janine Ghelfi

Copy Desk (day)
Copy Desk (night)

Marybeth Jacobson
Carol Deptolla
or Jon Olson
or Amy Rodenburg

Jerry Ziegler
Jerry Ziegler

Editorial Board
Features/Entertainment

Richard Foster
Joanne Kempinger Demski
or Damien Jaques

Jerry Ziegler
Janine Ghelfi

Graphics/Design (day)
Graphics/Design (night)

Dennis Powell
Ray Verespej

Janine Ghelfi
Jerry Ziegler

JS Online

Emmett Prosser

Jeff Maillet

Local News
(downtown day reporters)

Sarah Carr
or Tom Held
or Meg Kissinger
or Graeme Zielinski

Mark Johnson

Local News
(downtown night reporters)

Steve Potter
or Carol Deptolla

Jerry Ziegler

Local News (EAs)

Steve Potter

Jerry Ziegler

Madison Bureau

Patrick Marley

Mark Johnson

Cedarburg Bureau

Tom Kertscher

Mark Johnson

Waukesha Bureau

Mike Johnson

Mark Johnson

Racine County Bureau

or Jacqui Seibel
Jennie Tunkieicz

Mark Johnson

Messenger Desk

Steve Potter

Jerry Ziegler

MKE

Nicole Sweeney

Mark Johnson

National Desk

Carol Deptolla

Jerry Ziegler

News Information Center

Sarah Johnson

Jeff Maillet

Photo (downtown)

Mark Graham

Janine Ghelfi

Sports
(downtown/Green Bay)

or Dave Kirner
or Janine Ghelfi
Rick Braun

Jeff Maillet

or Vince Butler
or Alex Mitchell
or Tom Silverstein
or Sam Toman

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.milwaukeeguild.com