

POST GUILD UNIT

FORUM...



The Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild, Local 32035, TNG-CWA

March 17, 2008

Bargaining Over Guild Buyout Begins

Bargaining began Monday over the terms of the proposed buyout for Guild-covered employees amid complaints from Guild officials and employees that the proposal is discriminatory.

The proposal, presented to the Guild late last Wednesday, allows all full-time and some part-time newsroom employees to take advantage of the package of retirement sweeteners as long as they will be 50 years old and have worked at The Post for five years by the end of 2008. But the vast majority of Guild-covered commercial employees – including all advertising salespeople -- have been told they cannot participate. That is one of several aspects of the proposal that the Guild will seek to change in bargaining.

The terms of the buyout are similar to those offered in 2006. Employees who participate would get a lump-sum parting gift of anywhere from half their annual salary (for those with just five ye) to twice their annual salary (for those with 30 years). Part or all of that could be rolled over into an IRA to avoid taxes.

The plan also calls for an enhanced pension. For example, a 55-year-old employee would normally get just 40 percent of his or her “full pension” (“full pension” comes out to 35-40% of your salary, plus an additional annual amount equal to \$210 times your years of service). But under the terms of the plan, that person would be entitled to 80 percent of his or her full pension. For an employee earning \$100,000 that means instead of getting annual payments of about \$20,000 the annual payout would be about \$40,000. In April every eligible employee will receive a letter spelling out their exact benefits.

Also under the plan, employees whose age and years of service add up to at least 75 would be entitled to a full pension no matter their age. And those old enough to be already entitled to a full pension would get an extra 10 percent.

The proposal also includes access to The Post’s retiree health plan (similar to the employee plan but with premiums a little more than triple what they are for most current employees) for employees who are not yet eligible for Medicare. It would also provide \$3,500 a year to help pay for those premiums.

In a big break from previous buyouts, part-timers can participate as long as they are otherwise eligible and have averaged at least 22.5 hours per week during 2007. Part-timers are not, however, eligible for the retiree health insurance under the proposal.

Gratifyingly, many of the terms in this buyout reflect victories the Guild achieved during the last buyout. For example, the last buyout offered \$3,000 a year to help offset the costs of health insurance, but the Guild got that increased to \$3,500 – the same number now being offered in this year’s buyout. (Given the rising cost of health care, the Guild this year will push to raise that amount further.) Other elements of this year’s proposal also are familiar to the Guild for having been won during the last round, including free access to transitional counseling to help employees prepare for new jobs.

The Guild will work in bargaining to expand access to the buyout for all commercial employees who meet the age and years-of-service minimums, in recognition that these employees are equally important contributors to The Post’s success over the years. The Guild encourages all eligible employees on the news and commercial sides to stand up – and speak up – in favor of including our colleagues who have been left out of this offer.

Pop Quiz: Why is there a buyout happening instead of layoffs, as are occurring at other papers? Your Guild contract puts strict limits on so-called “economy dismissals,” requiring that the most recently hired employees be laid off first. Without the Guild, The Post would not have to cut the buyout deals it has been negotiating with the Guild – three times in the past five years.

This is just one of many ways in which the Guild works for you. **In November, our labor contract expires and the Guild will be negotiating with Post management over issues that will affect not just the older veterans of this place, but ALL Guild-covered employees.** Are you doing your part to make the Guild strong? Guild membership is not mandatory with employment, but your support will make the Guild stronger. If you are not a member, contact one of the officers or representatives below, get information, and join.

The Guild is there for you. Are you there for the Guild?

To join the Guild or for further information, please contact any of the following members or Guild representatives:

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