



January 16, 2007

A Road Map for Bargaining

Dear Guild Members,

Here is a Q & A to help you navigate Guild negotiations with the Sun during the upcoming months. Please keep it in a handy place.

Q. When do negotiations begin and how long do they last?

A. They usually begin in the spring, about April, and end when the contract expires on June 24th.

Q. Do I get a say in what the Guild proposes to the company?

A. Yes, the Guild is a democratic union that seeks input and involvement from its members in contract negotiations from beginning to end. Here's how it works:

1. **In the next few weeks, you** will be asked to fill out a bargaining survey, saying what you want – and don't want—in a new contract.
2. You will then be invited to departmental meetings to talk to union leaders about your issues. Please see the **departmental meetings** scheduled below:

Fri. Jan. 26 -- Ad sales; noon

Mon., Jan. 29 -- Marketing; noon

Tues., Jan 30 -- Finance, Credit, Payroll ; noon

Wed., Jan. 31 -- Newsroom; noon and 4 p.m.
 * Facilities employees also invited

Thurs. Feb. 1 -- Newsroom (Sports/Nightside); 6 p.m.
 * Facilities employees also invited

Fri. Feb. 2 -- Sun Park, 7 a.m.; Ad sales; noon

Mon. Feb. 5 -- Circulation; noon

Tues. Feb. 6 -- Howard County bureau; noon

Wed. Feb. 7 -- Baltimore County bureau; noon

Thurs. Feb. 8 -- Harford County bureau; noon

Fri. Feb. 9 -- Carroll County bureau; noon

Mon., Feb. 12 -- Anne Arundel County bureau; noon

Thurs. Feb. 15 -- Sun Park 11pm

3. After the Guild's proposal is drafted, it is presented to the members at meeting where you may make changes and then vote on it.
4. You will be briefed about the progress of bargaining from union bulletins, emails and from your mobilizer.
5. Negotiating sessions are open and you are welcome—even encouraged—to attend when you are not working.
6. When the bargaining committee has a tentative agreement with the Sun, it will be presented at a meeting of members for a ratification vote.
7. **So that the Guild make keep in contact with you regarding information before and during bargaining please provide Joanna Millhouse with your name, email address and home phone number and additional contact number if you have one. She can be reached at jmillhouse@wbng.org.**

Q. Who's on the bargaining committee?

A. The bargaining committee is made up of local staff, unit officers and other members from departments we represent at the Sun.

Q. What is a mobilizer?

A. A mobilizer is a Guild representative who is responsible for communicating with about a dozen Guild members who work in the same area. Your mobilizer will be your eyes and

ears during negotiations. In addition to passing out the surveys and bulletins, he or she will get answers to questions you may have and will pass on your suggestions to the bargaining committee. Mobilizers will also plan activities during negotiations.

Q. Why mobilize?

A. A union is powerless without active, vocal members. Mobilizing is an organized way to send a loud, clear message of what we need to make this a better place to work –without going strike.

Q. Am I allowed to talk about Guild business during work hours?

A. Yes, as long as it doesn't interfere with your work.

Q. Can my supervisor forbid me from talking about negotiations or participating in union activities, such as wearing buttons or joining a rally on my lunch hour?

A. No. Under federal labor law, if you are allowed to discuss the Ravens, the United Way or any other subject, then you're allowed to discuss the union and participate in its activities.

Q. What do I do if my supervisor warns me against participating in union activities, or punishes me for it?

A. Contact a Guild officer immediately. Most Sun managers are aware—from more than 50 years of union activity here – that it is legal to participate in the union. If you get in trouble for union activity, the law is on your side.

Q. Is there a chance we'll go on strike?

A. There is always a chance of a strike, but Guild leaders see it as a last resort and no strike is called without a membership vote. That's why we mobilize our members before the contract deadline to ensure we get the strongest contract possible—and avoid a strike. In the end, it's up to a membership vote whether to accept a contract, strike or take other action.

Q. What happens if we don't reach an agreement by the June 24 deadline?

A. Traditionally, we have been able to negotiate a contract by the expiration date. But if our members are not satisfied with the company's last offer, they can vote to strike.

Q. Do we work without a contract beyond the expiration date and continue to negotiate?

A. Traditionally we have not worked beyond contract expiration. However, one alternative is to work without a contract until we receive favorable proposals that are acceptable.

Q. I hear the Tribune Company is going to try and break the union. Can they just get rid of the Guild?

A. No. It is illegal for the company to wage a campaign to oust the Guild (or any of the six unions at the Sun). Tribune may try to weaken our contract so our members lose seniority rights, our good sick leave policy, health benefits and pay raises. It is up to all of us to keep the pressure on during negotiations so we keep our hard-won union benefits.

Q. So, can lots of bad things happen in bargaining?

A. Bad things can happen, but good things can happen too. In many cases, that is by standing up as a union and making sure the Tribune does not mistreat our members-- *like radically changing our sick leave policy without asking us*. Last contract, several different work groups got pay upgrades. The best thing that can happen is for the Union to remain strong, insuring that the Sun remains a good place to work.

Q. I work with some non-members. Where do they fit in to negotiations?

A. Non-members can't vote on the contract and can't attend union meetings. That's why this is a good time for them to join, so they have a say in their future. If you work near some non-members, encourage them to read the Guild bulletins—we give them to members and on-members alike. Let them know they can join at any time – even outside the door of any union meeting. Remember, there truly is strength in numbers.

Q. What happens if the Sun is sold?

A. Most likely the Guild contract will stay in effect. One possible scenario is there a "stock sale" of the Sun which would maintain the Guild contract. Another scenario is the Sun could be sold via an "asset sale," which would pose some legal challenges for the Guild regarding continuation of the contract – **but the new owner would still be obligated to bargain with the Guild.** But in all the recent newspaper transactions, contracts have remained in effect.

Q. Can we expect the normal \$1500 bonus to ratify the contract?

A. We should expect this tactic by the Tribune to entice our members. But don't be fooled by the signing bonus we may have to pay for it later (e.g. layoffs and buyouts).