

Metropolitan Council of Newspaper Unions

Bargaining Bulletin

August

12, 2011

Macomb Daily and Daily Tribune Bargaining

Initial Bargaining Sessions

The Metropolitan Council of Unions has commenced bargaining on new collective bargaining agreements with Independent Newspapers, Inc. (INI) which owns the Macomb Daily and Daily Tribune. The Council of Unions consists of Teamsters Local 372, the Mailers Division of Local 372, the Newspaper Guild of Detroit, Pressmen Local 13N and Detroit Typographical Union Local 18.

The prior agreements were bargained during the bankruptcy of Journal Register Company (JRC), owner of INI, in 2009. Those agreements expired on June 30, 2011. We are now working under extensions of those agreements while bargaining occurs. Either side can terminate the extensions by giving 14 days notice.

As in the past, the Council is bargaining jointly with INI on the major items common to all unions - length of contract, wages and health insurance. We had joint bargaining sessions on July 6, July 14 and August 4. In addition, the Unions have had individual bargaining sessions on their individual issues, and more sessions are scheduled. Another joint bargaining session is set for August 31.

Bargaining Issues

At the July 6 and 14 sessions, the discussions concerned the financial health of INI. The Company provided detailed financial and business data. The Company also laid out its position:

- Because of layoffs and cost-cutting, INI is financially stable right now. But the newspaper business continues to decline, will decline more in the foreseeable future and the financial health of the Company remains at risk. So, the Company wants short-term labor agreements.
- The Company's focus, as part of JRC's business plan, is "content" and "digital first, print last." This means providing reader content on its web site and all devices and social media used by customers - cell phones, Twitter, Facebook, e-mail, blogs, etc.
- The Company still needs economic concessions. It wants to get rid of "legacy costs" and to outsource as much of its production work as possible.

At the August 4 joint session, the Company present is first joint proposals: **(1) a one-year contract, (2) no wage increases and (3) employees pay 40% of the health care costs**, like other JRC properties.

In the individual sessions, the Company made proposals on contract language giving it the right to outsource any and all work and eliminate jobs. This will be a major issue in this bargaining.

The Unions proposed **(1) 3-year contracts, (2) continue the current protections of work jurisdiction and jobs, (3) wage increases and (4) reduce employee contributions for health care**. The Unions' position is that employees have sacrificed already to keep the Company in business, and the Company is doing well enough to reward the employees and preserve their jobs.

Call your Local Union representative with any questions or concerns you have. In future bulletins, we will keep you informed of how the bargaining is going. We expect some difficult bargaining.

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