

Clerical Contract Negotiations – Thursday, July 7, 2011
101 Walter Library

Present—AFSCME 3800: Phyllis Walker, Andy Carhart, Rick Castillo, Cherrene Horazuk, Kurt Errickson, Ginger Nohl, Peter Lunney, Judy Borrell, Doug Sembla, Mary Snyder, Amy Selvius, Mary Lou Middleton.

Absent: Polly Peterson (vacation), Kem Tae Lynch.

Present—Management: Sheri Stone, Judith Karon, Valerie Watson, Dorothy Cottrell, Leslee Mason.

Sheri: Is there a plan for anything in particular, for how we will present? We [management] do have a caucus room for today. Aminah made up some name tags, do we want to use them? [Yes] I can pass these out.

Kurt: There are a couple people that are alternates that aren't here today.

PW: We need one [name tag] for Kem Tae Lynch.

Sheri: What I will be doing is responding to AFSCME 3800's proposal from the last time we met. What I will do, if it works for the union, is go through each of the items listed from the proposal. Some of them have more or less a blanket response.

Wages: The first part of your proposal was wages. The U's position has not changed since the last time we met, on wages. Our position is no increases or steps for period for the contract. This is consistent with the position that all non-union positions have a wage freeze. This covers the general increase and steps. Furlough step—last year the furlough was taken to address budget issues. The furlough impacted all U employees. No intention to restore lost wages to any employees [that would go against the reason why there was a furlough]. Since we're in the difficult position of having to negotiate wage freezes, etc. we can't respond in other ways.

Increased Duties: Would agree that employees are being asked to do more with less time. All employees are being asked to do more in 8 hours than in years past. Its part of us being more efficient.

Salary grids: Has financial impact. If money was available, we could...[but money is not available].

Benefits: Today I don't have one [a proposal] for you, it's forthcoming. The U's benefit proposal will comply with the law.

Regents Scholarship: The U is not interested in negotiating the parameters of the Regents Scholarship.

Job Security: When Kurt presented his proposal last week, he said they were non-economic and for job security. The U does not agree they are non-economic. Individuals in a job class do not have all same skills. There is often a short learning curve for some positions. For me, [mine was] I had to learn the University. The probationary period for an employee is an opportunity for the U and employee to see if it's a good match.

Hiring priority: The current contract language gives employees who are recently laid off/in notice period, first opportunity on vacancies as long as qualified. The U is not in a position to hire laid off employees who are not qualified to do the job.

Elimination of Selection Criteria: The essential criteria can be very important to a department. Need to get as much work done as possible and correctly in a 40-hour work week. The U must be in a position to get the best employees for this.

Definition of a Layoff: Quick question—are you aware of any situations where the U is taking advantage of this situation?

Kurt: It's a fair question, please explain a little bit.

Sheri: There are a variety of ways to work with layoff. Departments can look at things in different ways. They can say we need all our employees but need to reduce hours. Other way to do it is some people stay at 100% and others go down to 50. Has the union observed situations where someone should have been laid off permanently and the department has messed around with the 90-100%?

Kurt: We'll caucus on that.

Sheri: That being said—no change to definition of layoff. The U needs flexibility. Vacancies: Rely on the employee being able to perform job duties and be qualified to perform the position.

Kurt: Question—I want to make sure I'm not missing something in your response, or that you are saying something you don't intend. Vacancies—ensure that individuals are qualified. Our proposed change is saying the department will offer vacancies. So are you saying yes to the 'if they are qualified' or no to the entire proposal?

Sheri: No to the entire proposal. With layoff language—a lot of the departments believe if there's vacancies and someone is qualified, that's where the employee goes. Issue with the layoff list—the union's position is people on layoff list would have to be offered the position if meet [essential] qualifications. The U's position is to not offer the position to an employee not qualified.

No Subsequent Probation: The U feels this is a necessary part of hiring process, it helps us find the best person for the job.

University-Wide Bumping: This is disruptive to the employee and department and it causes productivity issues. Kurt said someone may not want to bump their friend sitting next to them. It will be bumping someone else's friend even in U-Wide bumping.

Collegiate/Administrative Units: There's already language...understand there was a situation in arbitration where this didn't happen.

Work-Life Balance and Workplace Quality Issues:

Sheri: The U believes that the current process for handling these types of situation is effective. Last summer when we met...it seemed at that time that we had been providing helpful responses when issues [came up]. The U does not tolerate bullying, harassment, intimidation, hazing, and/or physical or emotional violence. Are you aware of situations where local HR was contacted and nothing was done?

Kurt: We're in the process of analyzing the bullying survey and will have more info for you on the 19th.

Sheri: Even yesterday, sitting next to someone Bob [Altman] got a phone call from someone in a situation. The employee wouldn't provide him with any information. Bob did the best he could in terms of providing contacts but Bob couldn't get the classification, etc. When calls come in, we do the best we can to help the situation. The U does not tolerate this type of behavior.

Flexible Scheduling: The U feels the contract language is sufficient. Departments do what they can. Telecommuting is an option for this. The contract does not limit this.

Employee Resignations: A 5-day rescission period delays time for replacement of the position. The U is not interested.

Discipline and Settlement of Disputes: The U feels that the best person to understand the grievance is the supervisor, if there is a misunderstanding is the best place to work with it. Also, the current grievance process is adequate. So no change in hearing officer at the 3rd Step. We try to...spend quite a bit of time if this person does Step 1...who does Step 2 and Step 3—try to find people that will be as neutral as possible in hearing these decisions. Sometimes do go up to provost. Depends on what level the grievance starts with.

Coaching: The U's perspective is coaching and problem-solving are 2 different methods. Coaching is getting them [employee] to perform up to acceptable standards. Feel it's not appropriate to use the 2 interchangeably or combine them.

Notification: The U does not see a need to change the process. In that, it didn't seem to be that there were enough issues for UMC and UMM to wait 72 hours. Employee has the choice to notify a steward if they feel it is necessary.

Vacation: Cashing out a week of vacation is a cost to department and colleges. It also can result in additional time of work unpaid if take vacation. Question as to why 3801 has this benefit and the rest do not. Will get back to you on that.

Sick Leave: The U is not interested in adding additional time, monetary issue. Not interested in adding grandchildren in.

Family Medical Leave: 12 weeks of medical leave is required. Extending it has a cost in area of benefits and productivity.

Parental leave: The U already provides 2 weeks paid leave, this is already a generous benefit and the U is not interested in extending it up to 6 weeks.

Seniority for Rehired Employees: The advantage of hiring external employees or employees that have been away for awhile is lower salary and vacation accrual, etc. Departments...if [they] have employees that are equal, this may tip the scale [for hiring].

Negotiations: Paying bargaining unit members—U is not interested, this is a monetary issue.

Sheri: The U would like to discontinue 3 MOU's, the first one is on the proposal handed out at the last meeting. One is the task force on office ergonomics and one is on respectful workplace. I have a proposal to hand out [if you like].

Kurt: I'd be grateful if you wouldn't mind.

Timeout for Caucus:

Sheri: We are in room 404. Do you want us to come back down and check?

Kurt: We'll come up and find you when we're ready.

--BREAK/CAUCUS--

--BACK IN SESSION--

Sheri: So for the 19th, Phyllis--you're working on Nicholson.

PW: If we can't get a room, should we let Aminah know?

Sheri: [Yes]

Sheri: Do you have any dates in particular?

Kurt: We do—and we have financial constraints in AFSCME right now. We're disappointed we don't have an agreement for paid time for bargaining. Looking at nights and weekends.

1st choice is Saturday, August 6 from 11-3.
2nd choice is Tuesday, August 2, 5:30-[8:30]
3rd choice is Monday, August 1, 5:30-[8:30]
1st, 2nd or 6th of August

Sheri: Looking for one day of those three?

Kurt: Correct.

Kurt: Wednesday, August 10 if we can't find anything that week, then the next week. We want to meet every other week, the 1st and 3rd weeks of August.

Kurt: Thursday, August 18 and the 2nd choice is Saturday, August 20. We were thinking 5:30 for evenings and 11 on Saturdays.

Sheri: Locations?

Kurt: TBD.

Sheri: Is there an aversion to St. Paul?

PW: No.

CH: Not during the State Fair.

Kurt: Travel issue.

PW: Some people ride bikes, take busses. If all else fails?

Sheri: Any other dates for us?

Kurt: That will give us 2 dates in August. [Let us] just see what happens.

Sheri: Any questions?

Sheri: Any questions from my group?

Sheri: Thank you.

Kurt: Thank you very much.