September 17, 2019

PSEA and Management met last week on Tuesday, September 10, for Unit I negotiations. We were pleased that the constructive tone from our September 5 negotiation session continued into this session.

During this meeting, PSEA presented our latest proposal on Article 9 (Leaves). The bulk of the discussion was on ways to permit employees who need time off to care for an ill family member to use their accrued sick leave during such absences. PSEA is hopeful that, with our latest proposal, we should be able to reach a Tentative Agreement (“TA”) on this Article.

We also spent considerable time discussing Article 8 (Health and Welfare Benefits), with particular focus on determining how much money is needed to ensure the viability of our members’ post-retirement medical benefits (often referred to as “Other Post-Employment Benefits” or “OPEB”), and how much money (often referred to as “Premium Supplement”) is available to continue to insulate our members against historical increases in health care costs for the 2020 Plan Year. Traditionally, both OPEB and premium supplement are funded from the “opt-out savings” which represent the difference between the District’s contribution and the amount of money paid as “opt-out cash to warrant” to benefitted employees who opt out of medical benefits. The discussions around Health and Welfare Benefits were a continuation of small group discussions that PSEA and Management have been conducting since May. At these meetings, we have been looking at the funds that are available for OPEB and for Premium Supplement with the purpose of ensuring the long-term viability of our health insurance benefits for current employees and retirees within the resources available.

Based on the discussions the parties had on Tuesday, PSEA and Management reconvened on Wednesday, September 11 to discuss how to address the upcoming open enrollment period for the 2020 Plan Year. We are hopeful that we will shortly be able to finalize an agreement with the District that will ensure the long-term viability of OPEB, while continuing our ability to provide for the 2020 Plan Year the bulk of the Premium Supplement which our members have recently received. Even if we are able to reach such an agreement, however, the small group discussions which PSEA has had with Management over Health and Welfare Benefits have revealed the need for continuing the conversation in an effort to make needed changes to our benefits model so that it is sustainable, equitable, and fair for the long term.

**WHAT’S NEXT?**

PSEA is set to return to the negotiating table on September 18 for Unit II negotiations. We also scheduled one more date for Unit I on September 26. There are still a number of unresolved issues and considerable differences to be bridged, but we are hopeful that the new constructive approach which Management has taken to negotiations – an approach which was made possible by the vocal support of our members for the PSEA Negotiating Team – will allow the parties to reach an overall Tentative Agreement for both units, which we can then present to the membership in the near future.

Our next regularly scheduled **PSEA Membership meeting will take place on Wednesday, September 25, 2019 at 4:45pm**. Our focus at that meeting will be on unionism and how we can grow stronger together. In addition, we will review the details of Health and Welfare funding, which will include a historical look at out of pocket increases, post-retirement funding, 2020 plan year changes and considerations for future plans and funding. Please [**click here**](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1IovfwT1vr_CiG-KAQYo1bXNOzB8dwJDYdF96id6m-Fs/edit) to RSVP for the meeting so we may have an accurate attendee count for ordering food. All members are welcome.

As always, our ability to win improvements for classified employees depends on having an active and engaged membership. If you have not yet signed a PSEA membership card, please complete the attached Membership Application and send to the PSEA office.

In unity,

Your PSEA Negotiations Team

Unit I

Doug Crooks

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