



OTTAWA NEWSPAPER GUILD
Unit 7B - 1050 Baxter Rd., Ottawa, ON, K2C 3P1
Tel. 613-820-6545 Fax 613-820-4770
email: ong@cwa-scacanada.ca

MINUTES OF GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Wednesday, June 13, 2012

1. Membership meeting called to order by Debbie Cole at 12 noon.
2. **Adoption of Agenda**
M/ by Gord Holder to approve the agenda. S/ by Debra Waite. CARRIED.
3. **Adoption of Minutes**
M/ by Debra Waite to adopt the Minutes of March 14, 2012 General Membership meeting. S/ by Dawn Butler. CARRIED.
4. **New Business**
 - (a) Presentation of TNG 25-Year Pin
Wayne Scanlan, Ottawa Citizen/Editorial Dept. was not in attendance; his pin with be forwarded to him.
 - (b) Elections Committee
M/ by Gord Holder. S/ by Debra Waite, and many others. That Rob Bostelaar be nominated for the Elections Committee.
 - (c) Executive Committee Elections - Members-at-Large
M/ by Debbie Cole. S/ by Chris Vernell. That Lois Kirkup be nominated for one of the open positions of Member-at-Large. There were no other nominations. Lois Kirkup was acclaimed as a Member-at-Large, leaving one vacancy.
5. **Financial Report**
 - (a) Update: [see attachment] Treasurer Peter Bennet reported that expenses through May 31 had been a bit higher than revenues through May 31, but he felt this was not a significant problem because many of the additional expenses were for education courses and conferences which would not be occurring again during this fiscal year. He expected that the revenues in the remainder of the fiscal year would cover the small shortfall.

6. Ottawa Citizen Unit Meeting

(a) Proposed Staff Reductions

Unit Chair Jacquie Miller talked about the company's announced intentions to eliminate approximately 20 jobs in the newsroom and 35 in total throughout the building. She added that the ONG would do everything that it could under the terms of the collective agreement to prevent and minimize job losses.

She said it would be difficult to say what would happen because the ONG did not know the numbers that would be involved in the layoff process; that would depend on the number of buyouts that were approved, and that number was not expected to be available until June 25.

She also said that the proposed layoffs were unprecedented in the history of the ONG. Never had the process been fully completed at the Citizen Unit.

Because of that, she said, some of the contract language with regard to the layoff process had never been tested.

Jacquie Miller reported that there were a few things the ONG did know about the current layoff process:

- Twenty jobs in the newsroom was an estimate, but the company's actual target was a dollar figure.
- Both the Citizen and Postmedia had described a plan to centralize editing in Hamilton, so it was safe to assume editors were more vulnerable.
- Citizen management had said it does not want to get rid of newsroom employees who were involved in creation and production of local content, but what that meant exactly was unclear. As well, what the reorganized newsroom (including an expanded Hamilton operation) would look like was also unclear.
- Citizen publisher/editor-in-chief Gerry Nott said those who expressed interest in buyouts would not be targeted for layoffs. He said the buyouts' decisions would be based on whether the Citizen could get by without those people in the reorganized newsroom.
- Layoffs would be conducted, under terms of the contract, by classification and according to seniority. It would be a complicated process, and nobody could predict how that would turn out. There was also no way of knowing who was most vulnerable to layoff until the buyout process was complete.
- Members were advised that the layoff process was described in the contract and on the ONG website.
- Because of the settlement of a recent grievance, since the contract was printed, photographers were now listed in E-3 category.

Jacquie also gave a brief description of how the layoff process might play out.

The company was to provide a number of layoffs in each classification, and then the job titles. There would be a 14-day period in which the ONG would have a chance to suggest possible measures to reduce costs, such as job sharing, voluntary resignations, etc. After that 14-day period, layoff notices could be issued.

She again promised that the ONG would fight the layoffs with whatever tools were available to it.

In response to a question from the floor, Jacquie Miller indicated that the severance provision in the contract with the Citizen called for one week of salary for each six months of employment to a maximum of 52 weeks. The buyout offer that was on the table for employees included three weeks per year to a maximum of 90 weeks or cap of \$150,000.

There was also discussion of the bumping process in the event of layoffs. In that event, employees in higher classifications could bump others in lower classifications, but only if they had greater seniority and had either performed the job previously or could acquire competence to do so with a reasonable amount of training in the opinion of the company.

Jacquie Miller also reported that it seemed there were significant differences in opinion between the ONG and the Citizen regarding a couple of points in the layoff process.

1) Definition of Classification: The contract stipulated that layoffs would be according to classification. The company has indicated that it believes every job title within a classification in the contract is itself a job classification. That could allow for targeted layoffs. The ONG's legal counsel, at Nelligan O'Brien Payne, held the view that the contract language referred to the entire classification. This may end as a point of debate in a legal battle.

2) Classifications E-3 and E-4: Classifications in the contract generally followed the salary grid, meaning, for example, that E-2 salaries were higher than E-3, etc. However, the salaries for E-3 were lower than those for E-4. The company had said its position was that E-3 was a higher classification than E-4. Again, the ONG's legal counsel said his opinion was that references to higher classifications were clearly linked to salary. For example, the contract said that someone bumped into a lower classification would be placed at the top salary point in that lower classification. The ONG, Jacquie Miller said, would not agree to a layoff process with which it disagreed, so this could be another point for a grievance.

A previous layoff case was grieved. After a two-year battle, the ONG won at arbitration and again at judicial review.

In reference to a question about that case and the freelance clause in the contract, Jacquie Miller said the clause said that the Citizen could not layoff a reporter as long as it was employing freelancers to do that work.

In the previous arbitration case mentioned above, the arbitrator held that this protection applied to all newsroom employees. At judicial review, the justices held that, while they could agree with the company's contention that such protection did not apply to members in classifications E-4 to E-10, the arbitrator's ruling stood because it wasn't patently unreasonable.

One difference in the current environment is that there are some freelance editors, which was not the case in 2001, the time around the previous arbitration case.

In response to a question from the floor, Member-at-Large Lois Kirkup said the ONG could not make use of the freelance language clause until someone was actually laid off.

Another question was asked about the status of summer intern reporters. The only related precedent involved an attempt to layoff a columnist in 2001, and the company's position was that summer interns were temporary employees. Temporary jobs were strictly defined under the contract.

Another member asked about the status of permanent part-timers. Jacquie Miller said it was unclear because that language had never been tested. A clause in the contract said the company shall not use part-timers if doing so displaced a full-time employee. However, the ONG legal counsel said it could be interpreted as saying, for example, that the company could not use two part-time reporters to replace a full-time reporter. Laid-off full-time employees could bump into lower classification or sideways into part-time positions, which meant part-timers are more vulnerable.

Another member asked for numbers related to prospective buyouts. President Debbie Cole reported that there were approximately 25 overall, but only 6-7 from newsroom employees. Only five or six employees had agreed to buyouts as of June 13, and it was unclear which department(s) was/were involved.

Members were advised that employees who were laid off would go on a rehire list for two years. As well, executive members and the ONG office had information on the seniority lists, which was based on unbroken service time with the company.

One member reported that the Citizen's managing editor had told her that employees whose buyout requests were denied would not be laid off.

Secretary Gord Holder commented on what he said was the fine work done on the matter to that point by Jacquie Miller and Debbie Cole, and Debbie Cole was quick to add Lois Kirkup to that list.

Gord Holder also noted for members that the ONG financial update showed the Defence Fund was valued about approximately \$1.63 million, and it was for matters such as fighting layoffs that this money was intended.

7. No CTV Ottawa Unit meeting held.
8. Adjournment
M/ by Gord Holder. S/ by Rob Bostelaar. CARRIED. Meeting ended at 1 p.m.