

Negotiations UPDATE

The Back-and-Forth of Collective Bargaining

Over the past few weeks, we received the union's wage proposal and other economic proposals. We have been busy costing these proposals out, while also working on our own economic package. We hope to have our first economic package ready to present to the union the week of June 7. In the interim, in addition to common table negotiations, we decided to use some of our recent bargaining sessions to revisit unresolved side table articles for Kenmore Mercy Hospital, Mercy Hospital, and St. Joseph Campus that we did not reach tentative agreement on before beginning common table negotiations. See the box to the right for recent tentative agreements.

As you may know, collective bargaining (or negotiations) between the hospitals and CWA is governed by a federal law called the National Labor Relations Act. The law requires employers and unions to negotiate in good faith to try to reach a new agreement. This includes meeting regularly, bringing proposals (suggested changes to existing labor contract language) to the bargaining table, responding to each other's proposals, and working toward consensus.

The current labor contracts are the starting point for negotiations. While the union may promise to negotiate higher wages, better or lower-cost benefits, staffing ratios or benefit protections, there are no guarantees with the back-and-forth process of negotiations. Negotiations may result in associates getting less, more or the same as they have now.

During this back-and-forth process, each party can make proposals to change the existing labor contracts. The other party can accept, reject or seek their own changes to the proposal through a counter-proposal. Any changes to the labor contracts must be agreed to by the hospital's and union's bargaining committees, and are subject to final approval by the affected associates during a contract vote. Proposals are simply a starting point for the discussion about a specific topic. It's best to reserve judgement until all final offers have been made.

Why is a Mediator Involved in Contract Negotiations?

You may hear that a mediator is involved in negotiations. This is quite common. A mediator is a neutral person who has expertise in helping negotiating parties address and potentially find common ground about core issues to reach contract settlement.

The mediator working with the hospital's and union's bargaining teams is from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS). FMCS is a government agency that provides free, unbiased mediation services. Mediators are automatically assigned to all of our contract negotiations.

Engaging a mediator should not be a cause for concern or an indicator of how negotiations are progressing. We agreed with CWA leadership to engage a mediator prior to resuming negotiations in the hopes that it would make the process go smoothly.

Sitting Across the Table...Literally

After conducting negotiations virtually for the past several months, we have returned to in-person bargaining this week. We look forward to once again having our bargaining teams meet face-to-face with the union's bargaining teams in our traditional manner and taking another step to resuming a sense of normalcy.

Because it's important to have the facts regarding contract negotiations, we will share regular *Negotiation Updates* with you. You may visit www.chsbuffalo.org/negotiations at any time for the latest news and information related to bargaining and to review copies of these updates and other FAQs.

KMH RN Tentative Agreements

- Hand Off Report
- Low Census (Article 8)
- Seniority (Article 12)

KMH Tech Tentative Agreements

- On-Call (Article 8)
- On-Call Procedure Operating Room & Radiology (Article 9)
- MOU Weekend Employees – Radiology Technologist (Article 33)
- Seniority (Article 11)