



The Frontier Reporter

Summer 2022

Guild seeks nominations for all leadership positions

Editor's note: The information in this article was emailed to all members July 14.

In the past, every three years, we have sent out a boilerplate request for nominations for anyone interested in serving in a Guild leadership role. The request normally goes out in October. But this year is different.

Given our new ownership, our union has never played a more vital role in ensuring a stable workplace where careers can grow. A poor leadership transition would be harmful to all.

We expect major changes in leadership roles next year and have some glaring vacancies that will need filling. So we are getting word out early.

We want to provide more lead time for anyone curious about serving in a leadership role to speak with someone on the Guild team and explore what greater involvement might entail.

We will have some unique, fully paid, in-person training opportunities available in October for anyone interested in serving in a Guild role so no one would enter the job unprepared.

We have some departments with little to no representation at all. We want to change that.

Here are some myths about being a Guild leader:

Myth: The main thing Guild leaders do is get union members out of trouble when they mess up.

Reality: The vast majority of work Guild leaders do has nothing to do with protecting individual Guild members in trouble with management. We focus on improving working conditions for all and making sure that the rules that govern our workplace and duties are reasonable, safe, ethical and fair. We also promote open communication and transparency whenever possible.

Myth: Guild leaders have to be confrontational with managers.

Reality: First, not all Guild leadership positions require much interaction with management. Second, many Guild concerns are resolved in an amicable and cooperative

manner. Even when disagreements persist, that doesn't translate into "meanness." High-level positions, though, are not ideal for people who fear conflict.

Myth: I'm too inexperienced to make a difference.

Reality: No prior experience is needed for most positions, though it can help. What's most important is for interested individuals to have strong conviction in the Guild mission, a willingness to devote time and energy to doing the job, and being connected and capable of building consensus while also being an independent thinker.

All officer and steward positions are up at the end of this year. The positions are three-year terms and carry annual stipends that range from \$100 to \$5,000.

Elections will be held for each position unless the position is uncontested. Anyone interested in serving should contact Sandy Tan at [santan716\[at\]gmail\[dot\]com](mailto:santan716@gmail.com) or Kim Leiser at (716) 856-2828 or [buffalonewsguild\[at\]gmail\[dot\]com](mailto:buffalonewsguild[at]gmail[dot]com).

The positions up for nomination include:

President: The union head who oversees the Guild leadership team, committee chairs and general membership meetings, chairs and sets the agenda for the Executive Committee, serves as a spokesperson and representative to outside organizations, interacts regularly with management and works closely with the Guild's full-time administrator to accomplish the Guild's mission.

Vice President of Mobilization and Communication: Responsible for ensuring strong communication with all members through social media, website, newsletters, emails and texts. This person also helps develop Guild mobilization activities and public messaging whenever the need arises.

Vice President for Contract Administration and Enforcement: Looks for, receives and investigates contract compliance concerns, interacts with management and chairs the Grievance Committee to resolve contract disputes.

Secretary: Custodian of the union's non-financial records and policies, handles union correspondence and minutes for all Executive Committee and General Membership meetings.

Treasurer: Reviews and approves financial transactions undertaken by the Guild administrator. Provides quarterly financial reports to the Executive Committee and helps prepare the budget with input from the Finance Committee.

Steward: Stewards are the union representatives who represent Guild members in specific departments and shops. They share information with the rest of the Guild leadership team and with their own colleagues. They also occasionally address issues that arise in their own departments or shops. Some larger departments have more than one steward. Stewards also attend Grievance Committee meetings.

Executive Committee Members: These are Guild members who do not hold one of the above positions, but serve on the Executive Committee to help set policy and direction for the organization. There are Executive Committee positions open among District Managers, Inside Circulation and the Sun papers at The Buffalo News, and positions open at all independent print shops the Guild represents.

All officers, stewards and Executive Committee committee members are expected to attend Executive

Committee meetings once a month and to participate in the decision-making process during negotiations.

OTHER POSITIONS:

The Guild has other open positions that are currently unfilled or meet infrequently, and is open to creating new volunteer positions and subcommittees as needed. Currently, some of this work is being assumed by officers but we're happy to delegate it to anyone interested.

Some open positions and subcommittees include:

Frontier Reporter editor – Responsible for writing/assigning/assembling the quarterly newsletter for the Guild. Position may come with a stipend.

Finance Committee – This committee is supposed to meet quarterly but has been meeting only once a year to review the budget.

Mobilization Committee – Works with the VP of mobilization and communication to develop and execute job actions and mobilization campaigns, particularly during negotiations.

Social chair – plans and organizes social events for the Guild, including the summer picnic and holiday party.

Prepress Department ratifies new deal allowing layoffs

Editor's note: The information in this article was emailed to members on June 30.

The Guild's Prepress Department at The Buffalo News on June 26 ratified a tentative agreement with the company. The final vote tally was 8-1 in favor.

The new contract would allow seven of the nine employees in the department to be laid off, with two Prepress employees remaining to do plate-making work.

Under the terms of the final agreement, the ratification of the contract technically marks the 45-day notification for the outsourcing of Prepress jobs. The company had claimed it would need as little as 30 days to outsource Prepress work even though the Guild repeatedly cautioned the company that all prior Lee Enterprises predictions about how quickly Buffalo News work could be outsourced have been wrong.

Since reaching an agreement regarding the Prepress contract, we have been informed that it will take longer than 45 days for Lee to outsource the department's work. No more specific timeframe has yet been provided.

"No surprise there," said Guild President Sandy Tan. "The Buffalo News is a complex operation. Lee wants to transfer the nuanced and skilled work that we do into a cookie-cutter process. We wish the company would take more time to figure out what we do here before they decide they can do it faster and cheaper elsewhere. At least Prepress employees will be paid a more reasonable working wage while they're still here."

The Guild negotiated raises for all Prepress members, most of whom would see their pay rise from \$15 an hour

to \$18 an hour, an increase of 20%. The one Prepress employee who already receives higher pay than \$18 an hour would also see a raise of 1%.

Those raises would factor positively into the severance compensation that laid off employees eventually receive.

Under the contractual severance terms of the existing Prepress contract, employees are entitled to one week of pay for every year of service. But under the "enhanced severance" terms negotiated by the Guild bargaining team, Prepress employees who would be laid off would receive an additional 10 weeks of pay plus another \$3,500 lump sum payment.

All Prepress employees also would be entitled to a signing bonus of \$550. Severance pay would be taxed at a higher "bonus" rate, but the excess taxes would be recovered when members file their year-end tax returns. Based on our calculations, the enhanced severance amounts to more than \$10,500 for each laid off member of Prepress beyond what contractual severance requires.

"It's so hard to accept that loyal, hardworking Guild members will be losing their jobs, but I think many understand the bargaining team fought hard on their behalf," Tan said. "I know we can count on our members to continue to work diligently and professionally until the outsourcing process is complete."

To ease the outsourcing transition for both Prepress and the customer service call takers in Inside Circulation, who are slated to have their work outsourced in August, the Guild will be making free financial planning and job training resources available to all Guild members facing layoffs.

Get to Know: Elizabeth Licata, editorial writer



Photo by Alana Adetola

By Aaron Besecker, VP/Mobilization

One of the newest additions to the newsroom at The Buffalo News is editorial writer Elizabeth Licata.

Licata, who worked as editor-in-chief at Buffalo Spree from August 1999 until she started at the News in late April, has been an Allentown resident since the early 1980s. She was born and grew up in Lockport.

The Guild is the first union she's ever been a member of, and her father was active in his teachers' union.

Q: What made you want to write editorials for The Buffalo News?

A: I had always thought about writing for the News, but imagined I might be an arts writer or something like that, as I do have a lot of professional experience in that area (and was a stringer for the News for 7 years or so in the '80s-'90s). However, I've also blogged for more than 15 years and blogging is mainly opinion writing. I was thrilled to be approached by the News; I really needed a new challenge. I love researching and writing about the various issues we take up. It's great to be working with such smart people. It might seem odd to go from having your name at the top of the masthead to anonymity, but I actually like it. Local newspapers are so important. This work is important.

Q: What was the hardest part about being the editor-in-chief of a magazine?

A: As an EIC, especially one with only a half-time associate editor, you're responsible for everything – all planning, all assigning, all copyediting, all typos, all

inaccuracies, all complaints. You also have to keep your costs down and manage a big group of writers and photographers. You need to work closely with the designers and keep the suggestions gentle and collegial. But a lot of those things are also the best parts of the job.

Over my 23 years at Spree, I learned so much about Buffalo and Western New York. It really increased my allegiance to the area. I especially love the very complex and often contentious planning, preservation and development scene here.

Q: What do you like to do when you're not writing?

A: I am an avid gardener, which is also part of my writing – I have blogged at GardenRant.com, a widely-known (mainly to gardeners) team blog, since 2006. I also read constantly. I've been involved with Garden Walk for many years. As an art writer and curator since the '80s, art is a big part of my life. We have a decent collection, mainly local artists.

Q: What does it mean to you to be a member of a union?

A: Unions are essential and I am honored to finally be a union member. If there had been one for magazine workers I would have joined it. I'm heartened by the small resurgence of union activity we're seeing now and would like to see it grow stronger.

Are you a new (or relatively new) Guild member interested in being the subject of this feature? Do you know someone who would make a good subject? Please reach out to Guild mobilization VP Aaron Besecker.

News Roundup

Waiting period for 401(k) plans for new members to shorten

Representatives of Lee Enterprises have told the Guild that News employees will be allowed to contribute to their own 401(k) plans sooner than had been previously allowed.

This shortened waiting period, sparked by a Guild request, means new members won't have to be an employee for a year before being able to start contributing.

The existing News policy allows workers to set up a 401(k) only after working for a year and working 1,000 hours.

At some other Lee papers, employees are permitted to participate 30 days after their date of hire.

We are awaiting further information from the company about when the change will be effective.

Shout out to Jon Harris in Editorial who spearheaded the effort. The Executive Committee passed a resolution on this in June and forwarded the request to Lee.

Guild launches text alert system

The Buffalo Newspaper Guild has rolled out a new way to keep you informed about things you should know as a member of our union.

We've set up an alert system to send official announcements and updates as text messages, a tool we believe will help get important information to you in a convenient, immediate method.

In order to receive the messages, you first have to opt-in. You should have received a couple emails about this in June. Those emails have the link you need to sign up. If you don't have those emails, contact Mobilization VP Aaron Besecker at aaron[dot]besecker[at]gmail[dot]com.

We won't be bombarding you with texts. And you'll be able to unsubscribe at any time.

Inside Circ outsourcing update

Some members in Inside Circulation who are being outsourced have already begun leaving the News.

For those who have not yet left, their last potential workday at the News is Aug. 7. Many of the members losing their jobs at the News have accepted positions with Lee Enterprises.

Not all department employees are being outsourced: those members who are employed as B clerks will remain.

Comings & Goings from The Buffalo News/Sun papers

Comings

Anisa Almadrahl - Inside Circ
Louis Clark - Inside Circ
Miquel Gonzalez - Inside Circ
Roman Henry - Inside Circ
Alexis Koone - Inside Circ
Elizabeth Licata - Editorial/Opinion
Libby March - Editorial/Photo
Anthony Turello - DM

Goings

Sharon Cantillon - Editorial/Photo
Greg Connors - Editorial/Opinion
John Hickey - Editorial/Photo
Robert Kirkham - Editorial/Photo
James McCoy - Editorial/Photo
Joan Portman - DM
Tom Prohaska - Editorial
Celestine Robinson - DM
Dylan Ross - DM
Jason Wolf - Editorial/Sports

Next meetings

The Executive Committee will meet on Monday, Aug. 8. The general membership meetings will be Wednesday, Sept. 14.

Guild participates in Waterkeeper's 'Spring Sweep' cleanup

By Steve Watson, Guild secretary

Fourteen Buffalo Newspaper Guild and family members took part in Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper's annual "Spring Sweep" on April 23.

We take part in the annual clean-up to honor the late John "Jay" Bonfatti, a longtime environmental reporter for The Buffalo News and dedicated Guild officer.

This year, the Guild team was assigned to clean along Scajaquada Creek at West Avenue underneath the 198, an interesting first-time location for our group.

In a new wrinkle, the Waterkeeper organizers handed out clipboards with pre-printed forms for us to try to track the items we collected as part of a database the group was building.

Working under gray skies on a blessedly rain-free Saturday morning, the Guild crew broke into teams to diligently collect what one Waterkeeper official described as an "impressive" 42 bags of trash.

A decidedly incomplete list of the items collected featured yellowed, sodden copies of The Buffalo News (We love our readers), Gatorade bottles, a Columbia jacket, losing scratch-off tickets, wrappers from male enhancement products and far too many coffee cups from Tim Hortons and other local establishments to count.

On a somber note, we also found a sleeping bag, unopened food and clothing, an indication the trash-filled underpass was someone's home.

We had a solid turnout but could have had twice as many volunteers as we did and still had plenty of garbage to pick up.

The stalwart participants who did show up were: Guild President Sandy Tan; Vice President for Contract Administration Scott Scanlon; Secretary Steve Watson and his son, Eli; Executive Committee member Mike Pesarchick and his son, Mike; Executive Committee member Jon Harris and his wife, Kristen Parker; Editorial's Seth Wallace; Editorial's Katherine Fitzgerald; and Editorial's Adam Zyglis, wife, Jessica and children, Clyde and Vera.



Guild members, family and friends participated in Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper's annual "Spring Sweep" on April 23.

Meeting Minutes

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes: April 4, 2022

President Sandra Tan called the executive committee meeting to order by Zoom at 5:05 p.m. Monday, April 4, 2022.

Motion/Second/Carried Besecker/Portman to approve the March 7 executive committee meeting minutes.

Mobilization Report

Vice President for Mobilization Aaron Besecker said the Guild is preparing to set up a text-messaging system, through the Action Network platform, to reach members. There's a modest monthly cost and no limit on the number of messages the Guild can send but members will have to opt in to receive them. Besecker said he's been considering how best to launch the service, to make sure more members opt into the service, and sought the input of committee members. He said the text messages will supplement and amplify Guild emails. The typical email the Guild sends out is read by just under 70% of its members. Internal data show 76% of members engage often with Guild emails, 9% engage sometimes and 10% engage rarely.

Administrative Officer Kim Leiser said there is a problem with some Guild emails going into members' spam folders, where they sit unseen.

Tan said she sees the value of using text-message alerts to alert members to important emails and job actions. Editorial delegate Mark Sommer agreed that it's worth trying anything to get more people to open and read their emails.

Tan then shifted the discussion to the question of the flyers the Guild still prints out and shares with members within The Buffalo News building and sought feedback from committee members. Secretary Steve Watson said, based on how many of the flyers pile up on desks in the newsroom, printing them now is a waste of paper and money and handing them out is a waste of those members' time. District Manager steward Joan

Portman agreed that it's a waste of paper and no one looks at the flyers. Vice President of Contract Administration Scott Scanlon said, with the text-message system soon to start up, this method of communication is redundant.

Tan did say the Guild might need to employ one-one-one outreach to members who consistently don't open emails.

Editorial delegate Mike Harrington said those members probably aren't reading the flyers, either, while Scanlon said you can only try reaching people so many different ways.

Leiser said the Guild doesn't have a cell phone for every member, so we'll have to work on that.

Besecker said the next issue of the Frontier Reporter will be coming out soon.

Tan said, based on the consensus of the executive committee, the Guild won't print out flyers on a widespread basis anymore but they'll still be posted to Guild bulletin boards.

Grievance Report

Scanlon said Tan recently sent an email regarding Erik Brady to a group of managers including Vice President Tammy Turnbull, Deputy Managing Editor Denise Jewell Gee, Assistant Managing Editor Bruce Andriatch, Sports Editor Josh Barnett and Gusto Manager Geoff Nason. Brady is a freelance columnist for The News and the Guild has received numerous complaints from sports reporters that Brady has stepped on their toes in writing about topics that they would normally cover as part of their beats. These include recent columns involving Rick Jeanneret's looming retirement, NCAA Tournament action and history and the announcement of the Buffalo Bills stadium deal. Tan argued the editors need to start saying no to Brady's pitches, in cases where they inappropriately impinge on Guild territory, and they need to have a better process to ensure all editors and reporters are aware of who's covering what. This

situation is complicated, to a degree, by the fact the Guild doesn't have exclusive jurisdiction online.

Scanlon noted this issue would be resolved for the most part if The News made him a digital content coordinator, but the company has resisted this.

Tan said this has been a frustrating process and an issue since Brady began writing for The News.

Editorial delegate Rachel Lenzi said there's been a lack of communication from the sports editors.

Tan said she will follow up with Deputy Managing Editor Margaret Kenny to address this further.

Finally, on an unrelated topic, Tan said there was a recent example of an unlabeled sports betting item on the Buffalo News homepage. She said she'd end it along to Scanlon.

President's Report

Tan pointed out The News was planning to hire four reporting interns this summer, including one through a Dow Jones intern program. But, she added, Lee Enterprises is making more money available to hire additional interns, as part of a company-wide diversity effort, as many as three more: on city side, in sports and in photo.

Tan said The News still plans to hire to fill numerous open reporting and editing positions in the newsroom. Some of these positions were budgeted for and were previously posted. She said she will try to get an updated list of the positions the company plans to fill.

Regarding bargaining for a new contract for Prepress employees, Tan said the Guild has had one meeting with Turnbull and Astrid Garcia, Lee's vice president for human resources and legal. Turnbull and Garcia reiterated that the company wants to outsource nearly the entire department affecting nine workers.

The Prepress bargaining team has met to work on a counterproposal that would offer enhanced severance for workers who lose their jobs and for raises for workers in the department until and unless their positions are outsourced, Tan said. She said the Guild is waiting for more information from The News and will be meeting again with the company soon.

New Business

The Guild has received official notification, as required in the new contract, from the company that it intends to outsource positions within Inside Circulation. This shift would affect about 12 employees who take calls from customers.

Lee is offering the Inside Circ employees the chance to work remotely, handling Buffalo News callers, but only a few have accepted, Tan said. The employees will receive enhanced severance.

Leiser said the outsourcing will take effect in August.

Sommer pointed out how there's hardly anyone left working in large sections of The News building and it's impossible to reach anyone in customer service.

Tan said The News has offered a buyout to its six photographers, not counting its chief photographer. All six eligible photographers have requested paperwork on the buyout. The company wants at least two of them to accept the buyout. If more than two accept the offer, Tan said, the company has committed to hiring replacements.

Tan requested approval to hire Level Financial Advisors, as the Guild has done in the past in similar instances, to offer financial advice to members in Prepress, Inside Circulation and on the photo desk.

M/S/C Besecker/Sommer to approve hiring Level to provide this service to those members.

Tan said The News is eliminating the digital content coordinator/multimedia producer position in the Features department. That's Guild member Ben Tsujimoto. The News

has agreed to shift Tsujimoto to the vacant general assignment reporting position within the newsroom.

Leiser said Guild officers have gone back and forth with News management on some issues related to Tsujimoto's transfer, including the length of the probationary period and when and at what level of seniority/pay Tsujimoto would shift from his "E" classification to the standard reporters' "D" classification.

Tan said the Guild was preparing a counterproposal to The News' latest offer. Scanlon noted Guild officers have coordinated with Tsujimoto throughout this process.

Finally, Tan updated the committee on the Guild's efforts to hold another meeting of the Labor Management Committee with News leadership. While the Guild sought to have as many News managers as possible attend the meeting, along with numerous Guild representatives, the News shot this down. The News said only Turnbull and Kenny will meet with the Guild, which only can have Tan and Leiser in attendance. Tan said she's disappointed by this lack of cooperation from the News.

District Manager steward Joan Portman said there are still a number of "down" delivery routes, and the News still is having trouble finding carriers, but the problem is better than it was previously. Portman, Tan and Leiser discussed issues related to newspaper delivery, district managers and the recent promotions of three DMs to management-level positions.

Tan noted the Guild was holding two general membership meetings on Wednesday April 6.

Scanlon pointed out that the newly redesigned Buffalo News website, following a template similar to that of Lee's St. Louis Post-Dispatch, was going live soon.

The executive committee will next meet at 5 p.m. Monday, May 9.

Tan adjourned the meeting at about 6:25 p.m.

Attendance: President Sandy Tan, Secretary Steve Watson, Vice President Contract Administration Scott Scanlon, Vice President Mobilization Aaron Besecker, Editorial delegate Mike Harrington, Editorial delegate Mark Sommer, Administrative Officer Kim Leiser, Editorial night side steward Mike Pesarchick, Editorial delegate Rachel Lenzi, District Manager steward Joan Portman, ABC steward Alva Hill, Treasurer/Typographical night side steward Hilary Osborn.

Excused: None

Absent: Typographical night side steward Mark Hanover, Sun Newspapers steward Francesca Bond, Editorial delegate David Robinson.

Local Meeting Minutes: April 6, 2022

President Sandy Tan called the meeting to order shortly after 1 p.m. Wednesday April 6, 2022, in the former cafeteria of the News building with several dozen members in attendance in person.

Tan began by welcoming new members who have joined the Guild in the time since the previous general membership meeting in December.

Tan then ran through the grievance report, including, as addressed in more detail in previous executive committee meeting minutes, issues the Guild has had with unlabeled sports ad content and columns produced by a News freelancer, Erik Brady, that have infringed upon the work of Guild sports reporters.

Tan noted the Guild is switching to an email-only format for updates for members going forward and, with limited exceptions, will no longer print out flyers for distribution within the building. She asked members to contact Vice President of Mobilization Aaron Besecker if they are not receiving Guild emails.

And, she said, the Guild will start sending text message alerts to members. The details still are being worked out but the text-messaging service will require members to opt in to the program.

The annual Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper cleanup will take place on Saturday, April 23. Tan asked anyone interested in volunteering for the cleanup with the Guild to sign up on a form that was passed around the room.

Finally under mobilization, Tan said the Frontier Reporter publication will be coming out soon.

Tan said the News is hiring seven or, perhaps, eight newsroom interns, including several funded by Lee Enterprises. The internships are 10 weeks in length.

Tan noted the passing since the December membership meeting of two well-liked and still-mourned Guild members in editorial: Miguel Rodriguez, a veteran high school sports reporter, and Eric DuVall, an assistant city editor.

Lee and The Buffalo News have started making contributions to members' 401K accounts, Tan pointed out, as required under the terms of the contract after Lee froze members' pensions.

Tan said the Orchard Park and West Seneca Sun newspapers, which had struggled to grow their circulations, have closed. The Hamburg Sun is the only one of the weekly Sun newspapers still published by The News. However, Tan said, no Guild employees at the Sun lost their jobs as part of the closings.

Tan noted the News still is hiring, particularly in the newsroom and including as part of an effort to fill vacant positions. One such soon-to-be-vacant position is Niagara County reporter, now filled by indefatigable Tom Prohaska, who plans to retire this spring.

Tan said she doesn't plan to run for another term as Guild president. That post, along with all other Guild officer positions, will be up for election this year for new, three-year terms. She encouraged any interested members to get involved with the Guild, including in leadership roles.

The Guild has started contract negotiations with the News for members in the Prepress department. However, Tan said, Lee and the News have announced they want to outsource this department. The Guild is working to make sure those members are treated fairly, whatever the outcome of bargaining.

The Guild received official notification from the News that it will begin the process to outsource the work performed by customer service representatives in Inside Circulation who take phone calls. This outsourcing is expected to take place by August. Affected members were given the chance to work remotely for a Lee hub, Tan said.

The News has offered buyouts to its six photographers, not including the chief photographer, and all six have requested the buyout paperwork. The News wants two photographers to take the buyout and if more than two do take the buyout offer The News would hire replacements to maintain four photographers, plus a chief photographer, Tan said. The buyouts amount to 52 weeks of pay, with no health insurance component.

Tan said Level Financial will advise any members facing the outsourcing of a job or the prospect of a buyout.

Some members asked questions about how the photographer buyouts will affect the ability to get all necessary photos taken, about why the News is cutting positions in some places but hiring in the newsroom and whether the News is committed to diversity in its hiring. To the latter question, Tan said it's a priority but one that's been difficult to fulfill.

Tan updated members that the digital content coordinator job in Features is being eliminated. Ben Tsujimoto has the chance to transfer to the general assignment reporting position within the newsroom. The Guild is negotiating on Tsujimoto's behalf regarding his pay, seniority and probationary period.

Editorial member Toni Ruberto, an editor in Features, said Tsujimoto's transfer is one reason the Gusto calendar is going away.

Tan said she's hopeful the Labor Management Committee will begin meeting again on a quarterly basis.

New Editorial member Janet Gramza asked about beginning a 401K. The News has a one-year vesting period, Tan said, before employees are allowed to start one.

Editorial member Maki Becker asked where things stand with Alden Global Capital now. Tan said the Lee Enterprises board of directors is safe from Alden for at least this year. But the hedge fund could come back with a better offer for Lee at any time.

Editorial member Cindy Szymanski asked about when the company will begin requiring employees to return to the office. Tan said there are no plans to change the current hybrid system immediately, but an updated policy could be coming soon.

Tan adjourned the meeting at 1:48 p.m.

A similar meeting was held via Zoom later in the afternoon.

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes: May 9, 2022

President Sandra Tan called the executive committee meeting to order by Zoom at 5:04 p.m. Monday, May 9, 2022.

Tan announced Melissa Burrowes has joined the executive committee as the new steward for Inside Circulation and Jon Harris and Mike McAndrew have joined as Editorial delegates.

Motion/Second/Carried Besecker/Sommer to approve the April 4 executive committee meeting and April 6 general membership meeting minutes.

President's Report

Tan noted that some members of Guild leadership would be having dinner later that evening with leaders of the union that represents journalists at the Albany Times-Union newspaper. The leaders are in Buffalo for training for new Guild officers. She said the Buffalo Newspaper Guild hopes to send a group of its own for this training in the fall.

Tan also noted that the Guild and Buffalo News management reached a satisfactory compromise on the employment terms for Editorial member Ben Tsujimoto, who was shifting from a position in Features that the News eliminated to a cityside reporting job.

Mobilization Report

Vice President for Mobilization Aaron Besecker said he sent out the latest copy of the Frontier Reporter and a letter on the Guild's new methods of communicating with its members, notably the plan to set up a text-messaging system.

He said the Guild had a good turnout for the Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper 2022 Spring Sweep. A couple of dozen members and family members helped clean up a section along Scajaquada Creek underneath the 198.

Grievance Report

Vice President of Contract Administration Scott Scanlon said he's keeping an eye on the Buffalo News' new website. While it has sponsored content, including articles produced through Lee Enterprises' Front Page Bets initiative, Scanlon said he isn't seeing any "stray advertising that's masquerading as news."

Tan said Guild leaders always keep an eye out for potential jurisdiction violations. The Guild didn't formally object to this, but one such example would be the column about the new website written by recently departed Editor Mike Connelly. Per the contract, a piece like that is supposed to run in the Sunday Viewpoints section and not the City and Region section, where it was published.

Old Business

Tan gave a Prepress bargaining update. She reminded members that under the News' outsourcing proposal, seven of nine current positions would be outsourced. Two remaining Prepress employees would be shifted to the Engravers' contract, which is weaker than the Guild contract, Tan said.

The News offered an initial severance package that is the minimum required under the Guild contract, she said. The News has agreed to some Guild proposals, such as raises for employees for the remainder of their tenure with the company, but not enhanced severance for those who would leave.

The sides are “pretty far apart” on some key issues, Tan said, but she was optimistic they could reach agreement.

Treasurer/Typographical nightside steward Hilary Osborn has handed out informational flyers to employees in the department.

Tan and Guild Administrative Officer Kim Leiser said three employees in the department potentially want to stay with the News but there are only two positions available.

The Prepress contract expired in April.

Tan then discussed the buyout offered to photographers in Editorial. To recap, the News offered buyouts to the six newsroom photographers, a number that does not include the chief photographer.

The News wanted at least two photographers to accept a buyout. If any additional photographers accept a buyout, the News plans to hire replacements to ensure the newsroom would have four photographers and one chief photographer. As of the time of this meeting, Leiser said, two photographers had signed their paperwork and two others would do so imminently.

Tan wondered when the News would start hiring their replacements. Besecker said the News likely would have to wait until the paperwork is officially filed before formally hiring replacements.

New Business

Tan said the Guild's Tonawanda News bargaining unit has ratified a new contract. The Tonawanda News is defunct but this unit represents 15 employees who work on the Niagara Gazette and the Lockport Union-Sun and Journal. It's a two-year contract, retroactive to April 1, that includes raises.

Tan then brought up the job cuts Lee has imposed across the chain. She said the best estimate Guild leaders across the company, along with media reporting on the cuts, is that 400 people lost their jobs.

At the News, this includes cuts to sales reps who worked within Amplified Buffalo, primarily those employees who focused on advertising for the print product.

McAndrew said the recently released second-quarter earnings report for Lee showed the company clearly is focusing on digital growth while trying to cut the costs of its legacy print product.

Though Lee's report shows the company lost money on the print side, that's still where Lee gets the bulk of its revenue, McAndrew said.

Tan said there are no more job cuts planned at the News for now.

Tan said the Albany Newspaper Guild has hired a lobbyist to advocate for a state tax credit that would benefit news companies and their employees in New York. The Buffalo Newspaper Guild has discussed this effort with its Albany counterparts and could assist it when those discussions begin again in next year's legislative session, perhaps with the assistance of our alumni chapter.

Burrowes noted the News plans to complete the previously planned outsourcing of a good portion of the Inside Circulation department effective Aug. 1.

Besecker updated committee members on the security issues in the News building and lamented a lack of communication from News management on the problem. Discussions with Guild members and research into publicly available police reports provided additional information on the security breaches in the building by at least one person who has been charged by Buffalo police. The News already had made some adjustments to security guard staffing levels, and hours, in the building and the Guild will continue to press the News to make

sure employees are safe when they are entering, inside or leaving the building, Besecker and others said.

The executive committee will next meet at 5 p.m. Monday June 6.

Tan adjourned the meeting at 6:22 p.m.

Attendance: President Sandy Tan, Secretary Steve Watson, Vice President Contract Administration Scott Scanlon, Vice President Mobilization Aaron Besecker, Editorial delegate Mike Harrington, Editorial delegate Mark Sommer, Administrative Officer Kim Leiser, Editorial nightside steward Mike Pesarchick, Editorial delegate Rachel Lenzi, District Manager steward Joan Portman, ABC steward Alva Hill, Treasurer/Typographical nightside steward Hilary Osborn, Editorial delegate Jon Harris, Editorial delegate Mike McAndrew, Inside Circulation steward Melissa Burrowes.

Excused: None

Absent: Typographical nightside steward Mark Hanover, Sun Newspapers steward Francesca Bond, Editorial delegate David Robinson.

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes: June 6, 2022

President Sandra Tan called the executive committee meeting to order by Zoom at 5:03 p.m. Monday, June 6, 2022.

Tan announced Melissa Burrowes has joined the executive committee as the new steward for Inside Circulation and Jon Harris and Mike McAndrew have joined as Editorial delegates.

Motion/Second/Carried Besecker/Pesarchick to approve the May 9 executive committee meeting minutes.

Guild Administrative Officer Kim Leiser noted there's now an opening for a district manager steward and for a DM seat on the executive committee.

President's Report

Guild President Sandy Tan welcomed the summer interns who've arrived in the newsroom.

She also cited print circulation numbers for The Buffalo News that have declined precipitously in recent years.

The committee discussed the news that print subscribers soon will learn about, and see, a new monthly fuel charge on their bills. It's part of a Lee Enterprises-wide plan for the surcharge. Tan noted customer service representatives already are directed to try to placate subscribers who call to complain about price increases for print home delivery.

Tan talked about improved security measures Lee and The News have agreed to provide in the building, primarily boosting security guard staffing to nearly around the clock during the work week and 24-7 on the weekends. This followed reports of people gaining unauthorized access to the News building, prompting concerns raised to management by the Guild.

Tan said she expects Lee to make a decision in the next couple of months on the next editor in chief, replacing Mike Connelly. There are three internal candidates and an unknown number of external candidates for the position.

Mobilization Report

Vice President for Mobilization Aaron Besecker said the Guild encouraged participation in a national online assembly on combatting racism in the news industry. He also said the Guild would roll out a mini-campaign to support members in the Prepress department.

And Besecker said a letter went out to members on the Guild's new method of communication, primarily the text-messaging option.

Grievance Report

Vice President of Contract Administration Scott Scanlon said he wrote to Deputy Managing Editor Margaret Kenny and Labor Relations Director Tammy Turnbull to raise concerns that postings for jobs in Editorial don't highlight The News' interest

in diversifying the newsroom, a position very much shared by the Guild. He also said The News doesn't appear to be posting the jobs on sites where journalists of color are likely to see them.

Scanlon said he also sent an email to Kenny regarding a recent column by Erik Brady on the Buffalo Bills.

This is the latest in a number of columns by Brady, a freelancer for The News, that tread on topics better left to our full-time sports reporters to cover.

And Scanlon said he would follow up on the recent, occasional closing of the fifth floor dining area to make sure this won't continue to happen.

Tan said Guild leaders always keep an eye out for potential jurisdiction violations. The Guild didn't formally object to this, but one such example would be the column about the new website written by recently departed Editor Mike Connelly. Per the contract, a piece like that is supposed to run in the Sunday Viewpoints section and not the City and Region section, where it was published.

Old Business

Tan gave another Prepress bargaining update. She reminded committee members that the News intends to outsource seven of nine current positions in the department, while two Prepress employees would remain. The News previously had offered only to pay contractual severance but more recently agreed to offer contractual severance plus 10 weeks of pay.

The News sought a 45-day countdown to outsourcing that would begin with contract approval. The Guild, in its counterproposal, sought health care credits for Prepress employees as well as additional severance of \$30,000, \$25,000 or \$20,000, depending on employees' length of service, along with a \$1,500 signing bonus for all Prepress employees. The Guild also sought a 60-day countdown.

The News then countered, Tan said, with contractual severance, plus 10 weeks of pay, plus \$3,000 plus a \$500 signing bonus, calling it a last, best and final offer.

Tan said the sides remain apart but are scheduled to meet the following week to try to find common ground on a deal. She also said the Guild was putting together a flyer for Prepress members and seeking feedback on where to go next in terms of mobilization efforts. Leiser noted the News has added money to its proposal.

Tan and Leiser said this is the first time the News has formally given the Guild a last, best and final offer in contract negotiations.

Tan then gave an update on the buyout offered to photographers in Editorial. To recap, the News offered buyouts to the six newsroom photographers, a number that does not include the chief photographer, and five photographers accepted the buyout.

Four had left already as of the day of the meeting and a fifth, Mark Mulville, also had signed his paperwork but agreed to stay on through a transition period. The News now will hire three new photographers, leaving the company with two fewer photographers than before.

Tan gave an update on the contract reached for members of the Tonawanda News bargaining unit. Tan said the publisher of the newspaper group is raising an objection and claiming terms of the contract were altered. Leiser plans to go over the contract line by line with him to show this is not the case.

New Business

Tan led a discussion of the Guild's proposal to improve the News' 401K plan.

News employees currently must wait one year before putting money into a company 401K.

Editorial delegate Jon Harris researched the issue and found the News' policy is an outlier even among other Lee papers. There doesn't appear to be any good reason for the practice,

Harris said, and it doesn't help the company remain competitive in trying to recruit new employees.

Tan said she raised this issue with News management and it doesn't seem to be a priority for them. The Guild didn't bring this up in bargaining the most recent contract.

Leiser said the only cost to the News to make this change, and allow employees to begin making payments into a 401K sooner, is legal fees to rewrite the plan language.

M/S/C Scanlon/McAndrew to approve a resolution requesting the change in plan language to allow employees to more quickly begin making contributions into a 401K. The Guild will send copies of the resolution to Turnbull, Publisher Tom Wiley and Lee Vice President of Human Resources and Legal Astrid Garcia.

Leiser noted the fuel charge, mentioned earlier in the meeting, would amount to \$5 per month for seven-day-a-week subscribers and \$3 per month for Sunday-only subscribers, with the fee beginning later in June. It's a Lee-wide policy that may only last for the summer, Leiser said.

The Guild will hold a general membership meeting at noon June 8 in the fifth-floor lunch room and a virtual meeting at 5:30 p.m. The executive committee will next meet at 5 p.m. Monday July 11.

Tan adjourned the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Attendance: President Sandy Tan, Secretary Steve Watson, Vice President Contract Administration Scott Scanlon, Vice President Mobilization Aaron Besecker, Editorial delegate Mike Harrington, Editorial delegate Mark Sommer, Administrative Officer Kim Leiser, Editorial nightside steward Mike Pesarchick, ABC steward Alva Hill, Editorial delegate Jon Harris, Editorial delegate Mike McAndrew, Inside Circulation steward Melissa Burrowes, Editorial delegate David Robinson, Typographical nightside steward Mark Hanover.

Excused: Editorial delegate Rachel Lenzi.

Absent: Sun Newspapers steward Francesca Bond, Treasurer/Typographical nightside steward Hilary Osborn.

Local Meeting Minutes: June 8, 2022

President Sandy Tan called the meeting to order at 12:14 p.m. Wednesday June 8, 2022, in the former cafeteria of the News building with several dozen members in attendance in person.

Tan began by noting the late arrival of the pizza and welcomed the newsroom's summer interns.

Tan provided an update on the buyouts offered to The Buffalo News' six photographers (not counting the chief photographer.) Five of the six accepted the buyout. Four had left as of the time of the meeting and the fifth planned to leave later in the summer. The News planned to hire three new photographers and had already begun interviewing replacements.

The News plans to make hires in other parts of the newsroom and the Guild is reminding the company of the need to diversify the workforce.

Tan noted continued print circulation declines that are occurring for several reasons, including continually rising prices, frustrating customer service and delivery difficulties. She also highlighted a new \$5-per-month fuel surcharge, for seven-day-a-week subscribers, a fee that will cost \$3 per month for Sunday-only subscribers. This is a Lee Enterprises initiative, Tan said.

She pointed out the enhanced security The News and Lee agreed to provide within the building in response to the Guild's prodding.

At 12:26 p.m., Tan paused briefly so that people could dig into the pizza that had just arrived.

After a few minutes, she resumed speaking. Tan pointed out that furniture was being cleared out of the fourth floor of the News building, as well as on part of the second floor, in

preparation for the likely, eventual sale of the building at some point in the future.

There was no Grievance Report.

Tan also gave the Mobilization Report. She alerted members to an upcoming webinar the national Newspaper Guild was encouraging members to participate in that addressed how to prevent anti-Black racism in the news industry. And she asked members to double check that they are receiving Guild emails and noted they soon will have the option to opt in to text messages from the Guild.

She said the Guild, led by executive committee member Jon Harris of Editorial, is working to convince The News and Lee Enterprises to allow new employees to enroll in a 401K without having to wait one year after their hiring, as is the case now.

Tan provided an update on negotiations with The News on a new contract for members in the Prepress department. Lee and The News want to outsource the nine-member department. Tan said The News on Monday June 6 gave the Guild a last, best and final offer. It included contractual severance, plus 10 more weeks of pay, plus \$3,000 for the seven members whose jobs would be outsourced, plus a \$500 signing bonus for all nine employees, including the two whose plate-making duties would continue here.

Under this last/best/final declaration, The News could declare an impasse if the company and the Guild don't reach a deal soon, Tan said. This threat of an impasse, and of imposing terms, is unusual in News-Guild negotiations, she said. The Guild was planning to present some counterproposals, working within the framework of what was on the table already, Tan said. To support the negotiators, the Guild asked members to share and quote tweet the Guild's message calling out Lee for its bargaining stance, she said.

Tan reminded everyone that the customer service work performed by representatives in Inside Circulation would be fully outsourced by Aug. 7, though many members are taking jobs with Lee that allow them to work remotely for the company.

Tan adjourned the meeting at 12:55 p.m.

A similar meeting was held via Zoom later in the afternoon.