

AN UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS OF BARGAINING

Teresa Harmon, Manager, CAD



Know by now that many of you are following contract negotiations and are well aware that the National Postal Mail Handlers Union has served written notice to the Postal Service of its intentions to modify the terms and conditions of the May 21, 2016–September 20, 2019 collective bargaining agreement. This written notice of such intent must be served on the other party not less than 90 nor more than 120 days before expiration date of the current Agreement, as set forth in Article 39.2 covering separability and duration of the contract.

On June 26, 2019, the parties entered into an agreement establishing 2019 Collective Bargaining Ground Rules. The main objective is to conduct negotiations professionally and in good faith and to achieve a negotiated agreement on or before midnight September 20, 2019 with respect to wages, hours of work, and other terms and conditions of employment for the employees covered by the current collective bargaining agreement.

On June 27, 2019 the NPMHU's bargaining team, in an official ceremony to mark the start of negotiations, met with Postal Service Headquarters representatives to begin the process to find a successor agreement prior to the expiration of the 2016 National Agreement.

Indeed, as I write this article, the bargaining team has already submitted all three parts of its 2019 contract proposals on pending non-economic issues, to include Articles 1–8, 10–20, 22–39 and virtually all of the Memoranda of Understanding and Letters of Intent appearing in the back of the printed National Agreement. Many of these carefully developed proposals were submitted from Mail Handlers in the field and adopted by the Field Negotiating Committee for inclusion in the next contract to the Postal Service.

For example, on July 24, 2019, the NPMHU bargaining team held main table, on the record, discussions with the Postal Service's bargaining team to submit part 2 of its 2019 contract bargaining proposals covering Article 12, which covers the Principles of Seniority, Posting, and Reassignments, and non-economic bargaining proposals relating to Article 15, which covers the Grievance-Arbitration Procedure contained in the National Agreement. The Postal Service bargaining team during this stage of the negotiating process has been

largely inquisitive about the many proposals submitted by the NPMHU bargaining team, and has tried to avoid indicating how receptive they may be to any of the proposed changes.

Also on July 24, 2019 during main table discussions (held at USPS Headquarters at L'Enfant Plaza in Washington DC), the National Negotiations team identified and assigned the entire Contract Administration Department to all subcommittees, with President Hogrogian designating a primary lead representative for each article that the parties jointly decided needed a subcommittee. The members of each subcommittee include CAD Manager Teresa Harmon, CAD Representatives Kevin Fletcher and Charles Manago, Assistant to the National President Bobby Blum, and National Secretary-Treasurer Mike Hora. Lead assignments for each subcommittee are as follows:

- [ARTICLE 2, Lead is Charles Manago](#)
- [ARTICLE 10, Lead is Charles Manago](#)
- [ARTICLE 11, Lead is Bobby Blum](#)
- [ARTICLE 12, Lead is Kevin Fletcher](#)
- [ARTICLE 15, Lead is Charles Manago](#)
- [ARTICLE 32, Lead is Mike Hora](#)
- [MHA ISSUES, Lead is Kevin Fletcher](#)
- [OVERTIME, Lead is Bobby Blum](#)
- [MOUs and LOIs, Lead is Kevin Fletcher](#)

As of this writing, and not surprising to the NPMHU negotiating team, the Postal Service has strategically delayed submitting its non-economic work rule proposals during main table, on the record discussions. Instead, the parties have agreed that the USPS negotiating representatives will share at least two presentations with the NPMHU, a Financial presentation on August 30 2019 and an Operations presentation on a date still to be determined.

Collectively, the NPMHU Negotiations Team believes that all of the contract proposals submitted to the Postal Service will serve to protect and strengthen the rights of Mail Handlers and Mail Handler Assistants.

The 2016 National Agreement expires at 12 midnight on September 20, 2019. Many times in the past, negotiations

have been extended beyond the expiration date of the contract, especially when the parties believe that significant progress has been made and that a negotiated agreement is within reach. Whenever a tentative agreement is achieved—whether by midnight September 20, 2019 or some time later—the process to ratify the negotiated agreement will begin. Ballots would be mailed to all members of the Union for a ratification vote, with a majority of the membership needed to approve any tentative agreement. In conjunction with the next SAMLU meeting a few days after September 20, 2019, the National Office has scheduled a meeting to discuss with the Local Unions the status of negotiations over the terms of the 2019 National Agreement.

Finally, and important to note here, the ground rules agreed to by the parties provide that, in the event that no final agreement on the entire contract has been achieved by midnight September 20, 2019, the current National Agreement shall remain in effect, and shall not expire, until superseded by a new agreement, unless the parties agree otherwise. In the event that impasse occurs or is subsequently declared and no negotiated agreement can be reached, then parties will commence timely discussions with respect to dispute resolution procedures, culminating in final and binding interest arbitration.

As usual, the NPMHU bargaining team encourages all Mail Handlers to monitor the NPMHU website at www.npmhu.org and to read all bulletin board postings and other mailings, to keep informed as bargaining continues to progress. As more information becomes available, it will be made available to all Mail Handlers.

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A CHOICE THAT DESTROYS JOBS

Many travelers believe that turning down cleaning services helps housekeeping staff by reducing their overall work. According to UNITE HERE! and the housekeepers they represent, this is almost never the case. Because deferred service programs result in fewer rooms to clean, hotels routinely staff with fewer hotel workers or place more hotel workers on on-call scheduling. The program harms workers under the guise of environmental sustainability.

Starwood branded its deferred rooms cleaning program as “Green Choice”, citing its purported environmental benefits. Marriott now uses a similar “Your Choice” program at many of its legacy properties, including Marriott and Renaissance brands.

Both Your Choice and Green Choice programs reward guests with vouchers and loyalty points for turning away housekeeping services for which they’ve already paid. These programs save money for Marriott, but often have a damaging impact on hotel housekeepers with reduced hours, irregular schedules and injuries.

An analysis of the same 23 legacy Starwood hotels over 9 cities shows that these hotels had a decrease of over 700,000 work hours between 2013 and 2017. This is equivalent to over 350 full-time jobs lost.

Housekeepers at 6 hotels in Boston in 2016 lost over 6,800 shifts and \$1.7 million in wages and benefits because of an estimated 89 thousand room nights not serviced because of the program.

The Green Choice program has been in practice longer at legacy Starwood hotels. An analysis of 23 legacy Starwood hotels over 9 cities shows that Legacy Starwood hotels had a 49% increase in the number of injuries between 2013 and 2017.

Guests may believe they are making a choice to help the environment, but NO leading environmental studies recommend skipping housekeeping as part of a sustainability program. Environmental studies do recommend towel and linen reuse which hotels can implement without harming housekeepers.

The so-called “Green” program saves Marriott millions of dollars in labor costs, possibly taking advantage of customers who use the program out of sincere concern for our environment.

In addition, housekeepers report pain, injury, and difficulty cleaning dirtier rooms that are left un-serviced for days. These rooms take longer and require more chemicals to clean.

We are calling on all members to support UNITE HERE! and the housekeepers they represent by refusing to use the hotel’s Green Choice programs. Please sign the UNITE HERE! pledge and decline the Green Choice program. It is time to stand with our union sisters and brothers. The Pledge and additional information can be accessed at: marriotttravelalert.org.

**Source: UNITE HERE!*