

University of Minnesota negotiation minutes  
June 28, 2007, 101 Walter Library 10:30 am.  
Notetaker: Chris Koehler

Management enters the room followed by AFSCME employees who had formed gauntlet outside door.

Bob: I suppose I was aware that there were going to be other people here but as I think I indicated over the telephone, I do not think that this was helpful. I didn't know how I would respond to having more people here, I'm trying to work with a group and develop a relationship, I think I indicated I understand that you are all employees and I understand the open meeting law but I don't think this is helpful to the process which we know is a difficult process. To reach an agreement on and to present a wage proposal to several people that I never met, that I don't know, that don't have any obligation to our process I don't think is helpful, I really, I'm new at the university I've been here a couple of years, I understand I got to see the negotiation process two years ago, it's very strained, often times we work things out in the year, but the negotiation process is stressful or strained, I don't know think it was new last year and I thought as people became more comfortable with, more familiar with me and more familiar with my committee that things would get better. The union proposed one committee, I got a letter from Gladys or Joyce a few weeks ago or it might have been a call, the union wanted to have one committee, I thought it seemed like a lot of people to get a lot of give and take with but I was committed to try to make sure the relationship worked as well as it did and didn't want to push back against that one committee. I was trying to make sure we could get communication going smoothly, the union asked that when I respond to proposals that I not use simple yes or no response, that I give a rationale, regardless of whether it was something the union wants or not I tried to do that as well, hoping to develop a better, stronger relationship. I think that what my rationales served was just as a fodder for the union who responded back to management in a way that many of us thought was a scolding, I understand the union needed and had a right to do that, I think the response we received with each individual talking about how dismissive and nonresponsive and insensitive and insulting it was, it was a message that the union wanted us to hear but I think 45 minutes was excessive and I don't think it was conducive to getting an agreement. I was still hoping that we could get this thing going in the right direction, but after Gladys called I started kicking myself, we've got a variety of people here and had talked about ground rules and a typical ground rule might have been, no outsiders unless parties agreed to it, we don't have that ground rule, I'm not here to suggest, I don't generally do them it's my hope that we would have a relationship, a collegiality and we didn't need to have ground rules, so we'd say things that either party could hear that might be difficult, we would make the process work and I don't think it's working. I don't. I'm not comfortable in presenting our offer to several people who are here who have no commitment to the process, who are not participants, I knew we'd see several new faces and we talked about this before the meeting, maybe there won't be anyone, maybe there'll be a change of heart but if people showed up we agreed we're not going to be ready to talk and if this is the direction it's going, we may need to get the Bureau of Mediation here, I think that's what we're coming to. I want to caucus, I want you guys to

consider, presenting an offer in front of several people, who I won't have an ongoing relationship with, I'm not willing to do, we do have wage proposal and if we can do it in a manner, in a way in which we left table, I think if we're not able to do that I think we might need some help in getting negotiations on track, calling the Bureau of Mediation, it's not a threat, just trying to get some help in getting the process going, we know the issues are tough, I don't see that what we have going on is helping the process. I don't know if you want to respond but I think our group is ready to take a caucus.

Gladys: I do want to respond, I don't think you should consider that the people standing here are not part of negotiating process, they are the reason we're here, we wouldn't be at the table if we didn't have 3500 members who are a committed part of the process, they are the employees of the university and they are the biggest stakeholders in the room outside of this committee. I think if you want to know who they are, if you want introductions we are happy to do that, I think that these individuals are happy to tell you who they are, where they work. We've given you a full proposal, we've given you a wage proposal, a health insurance proposal and our joint contract is set to expire in a couple of days and we do not have an economic proposal from you and we need that for this process to go forward. That is what is holding up this process. We think that you should give us your opening wage proposal here and now, that would be the respectful and right thing to do, it would be respectful to our committee, the process and respectful of the employees who have taken time to be here because they care about what is going on at the table and as I said are huge stakeholders in what's going on. We have been through round after round of negotiations with the university and we have had fine relationships with the people sitting across the table from us, but frankly that's not the heart of process. What we have to do is put into place a process by which the decision makers of the university make the right decisions and begin to establish the right priorities. To be told "No," even with explanations, on all of our proposals over and over again, round after round after round of negotiations and to be told that we're sharing the pain and that we have been - I'm trying to think of what the last round was referred to by the university - that what was happening was "fair and equitable" and to see, to have people losing thousands of dollars from salaries while administrative salaries are skyrocketing - we are not here to make friends. I'm not saying that means we can't have cordial discussions, we're not here to make friends, we're here to make a point and we need to have the university hear the point that we cannot go on as we have over the last many rounds of negotiations, it's important to us to get your wage proposal and I encourage you to give us one. You are sitting in a room of very respectful people, nobody is disrespecting this process, we would like to hear the proposal.

Bob: First of all, I wish I had the opportunity to, I'd welcome everybody, I don't intend disrespect, I'm just not comfortable with having more people participating in the process that aren't part of the bargaining committee. It's not that I have any reason to not want to meet, if it would make people feel better we would have people give their names I'm still not going to be comfortable that this is the setting that we have, I do have wage proposal, I told you I do have one put together I'd be happy to present to the committee. That's

what I anticipate doing and if presenting it to the committee is not an option I think we're going to have to look at alternatives, my thought is we need to take caucus, we're going to take a caucus but before we do that I'd certainly welcome, if you want me to hear, to tell me whatever information, I'd be happy to listen to that but I'm not going to be willing to present our offer to everyone, we'll either caucus or if people would like to speak.

Gladys: I would like to ask people who are comfortable in doing so, to give their name, number of years at the university and if you're comfortable saying where you work, don't if not and also the amount of money on the form that you have - what your salary loss was - share that information.

[17 union members gave their names, where they worked, how many years and how much their salary had been devalued since 2002. I deleted the specifics from the minutes. 1 union employee, Erica Zurawski also gave her name which resulted in this exchange with Bob:

Erica: Erica Zurawski, student worker at the university, then clerical worker in disability services, currently organizing for AFSCME.

Bob: Are you still an employee?

Erica: I'm with the union.

Bob: OK.]

Gladys: Bob, I just ask you again to give us a wage proposal and you did state that you understand that this is a public meeting, there is an open meeting law I think it would be good faith bargaining to give us a proposal.

Bob: We're willing to take a caucus, I don't know how long it's going to be, I understand based on the flyer from noon to one you guys are busy.

Gladys: We have lunch then.

Bob: It sounded like there might be other people, sometimes we can take lunch, it sounds like you need lunch at noon to one that it's just before 11, I'll try to touch base to get back in 15 minutes to caucus, I understand your intent is to get the wage proposal.

Gladys: Yes.

Management committee left room to caucus at app. 11:00 AM

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Met again at 12:05 pm, 101 Walter Library, with negotiating teams and several AFSCME members present.

Gladys: My understanding is that you're going to give us your wage proposal and we're going to break.

Bob: Yes, I understand, maybe there's discussion on what we want to do, when I caucused, I think using the bureau would be helpful, at the end of presentation the wage proposal we can talk about what we do.

Gladys: Do you have responses?

Bob: On a couple of items if you want, if we're going to end the negotiations now for today I probably should give you those responses now as well unless you can wait, there are not a lot of items.

Gladys: Why don't we get the wage proposal and break and I'll call you.

Bob: All at the same time?

Gladys: However you want to present your proposals.

Bob: We'll do this, let's do this all at the same time so it goes as fast as possible. In the upper right hand corner you'll see what proposal it relates to. Everybody should end up with three. I'm going to do a couple of introductory comments, this morning has not as gone as smoothly as we'd like, it's best if the parties at the table are those who have been asked as well as elected, those folks to management, is the most conducive way to get agreement, I understand that there are some visitors and I don't want that to get in the way of getting this important proposal out I'll go through our wage proposals, let me first say why don't we just start, since the top of my pile is technical we'll start there, you'll see a minor date change in section 4, you do have a proposal on section 4 to remove language you wanted that language removed, we did not include removing it in our proposal, we do intend that our proposal would include the steps that employees are currently getting in the contract, our proposal is to continue those steps. On page 2 it's most important to remember that this is an initial proposal from this employer. We do cost steps that's not new, the average step I think, all the steps for the techs is 2 percent, 94.5 percent of membership gets a step, people will be moving up 2 percent and sometimes in healthcare this is more, so it's like a 3 percent increase because 94 percent of the AFSCME employees get a step increase. That's the crux of the wage proposal, the items that I crossed out are not relevant, they're lump sums from the last contract. The next one in my pile is the healthcare proposal, same kind of thing as you will have seen in the tech, the increase is 1.25 that recognizes as our last contract did, that the steps for the healthcare workers costs less so there's a little more money for across the board increase, more employees in healthcare are at the top of their step, so there are a few less that would get a step that's why the offer is 1.25 for healthcare. Clerical. In section A we crossed out the D-1 it's a nonsubstantial item, currently D-1 has all the wages since we

don't have a D-1, all the D-1 would be D that's in section five, there are some items that are irrelevant, the dates, E, F, G as well. This is a 1 percent salary increase for clerical employees in the first year and the second year. A couple of other wage items that I said I would respond to. Your first proposal, not the language, the economic. The first proposal on your economic was the 9 over 12, getting paychecks over 12 months, there's a lot of technical issues with vacation accrual, I'm not saying its not doable, if it is we'd like to do it as well, it's a difficult thing set up, a look at it would be good. We're proposing a committee involving a number of people from your payroll area who would have technical experience and I talked to them and they would be willing, that's our suggestion that we get a joint group together to look into that. The shift diff and on call increase on some of those, those are included in the wage section, we're still gathering information, we understand where the union is saying the wage is most important thing and that is this the best place to put money related items, we're still collecting data on shift and on call pay I think I gave you information on interpreters last time. Regarding this one, it wasn't on your economic proposal, it was on your language proposal but I think it's economic, the certified medical assistant versus medical assistant I did a little bit of research. In 2003 the class had a 1 percent increase first and second year, I apologize for the typo, you'll see something in ink that was inadvertent. In 2003 the wage and name changed, what happened was certified was removed, if you look at the job certified was still part of the requirements there was an addition if you were registered you, it was a title change not a substantive change in the class I don't think making a new class makes much sense because the qualification requires that you're either certified or registered. That would be our response to your three proposals regarding medical assistants. Regarding the economics that was the bulk of the university's response, if you have questions.

Gladys: If you could talk about how the university goes about costing the steps.

Bob: I can talk about it, but this is not something the university wants to negotiate.

Gladys: What do you mean?

Bob: If you want to try to convince me that we need to cost steps differently, that's not a place I'm interested in going, now if you want information about how the university does do it.

Gladys: I do want that information. Just for historical information the university has reversed their position on step increases. It took us several rounds to talk this through and we did reach that the steps do not cost, it was two contracts ago that the university starting talking about costing steps, I'm wondering what gets looked at.

Bob: Let's look at clericals because it's easier, everybody gets 2 percent, you would normally think that that would be a 2 percent cost, some people don't they are at the top of the scale, that would not be included in the step costs there are some others at the bottom that we don't include, once you deduct then you take 2 percent of what's left, there is some rounding but process is not unfavorable. Start with the average step and

take out those who aren't getting one. In the technical and clerical it's easy it's 2 percent in healthcare it's not, the average is higher but healthcare has more at the top. The numbers are the same as last time even though in clerical its possible that the numbers could have changed a little because of changes in the ranges.

Gladys: So the primary difference is that the university isn't looking at turnover.

Bob: Turnover gets included.

Gladys: Really. Maybe we should sit down and go over the numbers then.

Bob: That's pr<MISSED IT>

Gladys: We get a very different outcome.

Bob: I think it is included, I'm not positive on turnover. OK?

Gladys: I hear you. Thank you. We'll break and I will call you within a very short period of time to talk about how we want to proceed.

Management left room at 12:25 PM