



The Frontier Reporter

Winter Edition 2022/23

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Jon Harris has seen it before: Q&A with the new Guild president

Jon Harris has been president of the Buffalo Newspaper Guild for less than two months, but he's already had to represent members during some turbulent times.

Lee Enterprises has messed up employees' health care coverage, shorted their paychecks, cut newsroom staff and announced it would outsource The News' design desk later this year. It's a lot to deal with, but Harris has seen what happens at papers without strong unions.

Harris, 31, grew up in Genesee County, graduating from Oakfield-Alabama High School in 2009. He graduated in 2013 from Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, where he had dual majors in magazine journalism and political science.

After graduation, he was hired as a business reporter at the Gannett-owned Press & Sun-Bulletin in Binghamton, where he covered upstate New York's casino expansion. He followed his then-girlfriend, now wife, to Allentown, Pa. in 2015, becoming a business reporter at The Morning Call, a Tribune Publishing newspaper.

He joined The Buffalo News in September 2021 as the paper's business of health care reporter. In his first week, he covered the state's vaccine mandate for health care workers as well as the start of the Mercy Hospital strike.



Guild Secretary Mike McAndrew posed some questions for Harris as he takes over as president.

Q: Having grown up in WNY, was working at The Buffalo News your dream job?

Harris: It was definitely a goal of mine to work here, and I always felt this is where I would end up. My parents saved a copy of The Buffalo News from the day I was born, and it's now hanging on my wall in my home office.

Growing up in Genesee County – about halfway between Buffalo and Rochester – I always had a choice on the newsstand between The Buffalo News and the Rochester Democrat & Chronicle. I always

gravitated, for one reason or another, to The Buffalo News and spent many breaks during my high school shifts at Tops in Batavia pouring over the paper.

During college, I had interned here in back-to-back summers on the copy desk and then as a metro reporter, driving 40 minutes each way from my parents' house. Once I graduated from Syracuse, I had tried for many years to get a job here, and it finally happened.

Q: Have you worked for non-union news organizations in the past?

Harris: I worked at The Morning Call in Allentown, Pa. when we formed a union, and my former colleagues there are still trying to land their first contract with new owner Alden Global Capital. My prior job, at the Binghamton Press & Sun-Bulletin, was a non-union newsroom, and I saw significant newsroom layoffs occur around me within three months of starting in May 2013.

Q: What was the most striking difference between them and The News?

Harris: What's most striking is just how strong and powerful this longtime union is at The News. I give this union all the credit in the world for why this news operation is still as strong as it is. And while Lee, especially as of late, is weakening The News – to Lee's ultimate detriment, in my opinion – at least we have an avenue to fight back against changes, as well as contractual protections that we can enforce.

Q: Why did you decide to run for president of the Buffalo Newspaper Guild after having been at The News for a relatively short time?

Harris: I did have some hesitation when Sandy first approached me. But I've always tried to consider an opportunity fully, especially when someone who has done the job before, and whom I respect, suggests that I should think about it. I think I ultimately decided to do it because I believe in the important role the Guild plays in making this a better place to work.

For too much of my career, I feel like I've always been running away from terrible newspaper chain owners, first with Gannett in Binghamton and then Tribune and Alden in Allentown. Maybe it's because I'm from this area and I grew up reading The Buffalo News that I feel compelled to take more of a leadership role here and try to fight back against some of Lee's plans.

I think I also got a taste of what it feels like to change your employer for the better last year, when

I helped the Executive Committee get the 401(k) eligibility waiting period shortened to 30 days for new employees when it had previously been a full year. I think I also understand that I have, perhaps because of my business reporting background and some of my prior media reporting, a pretty good handle on the business and where the industry is headed, which I think helps in a role like this.

Q: In your first two months, you've had to deal with so many problems – the rushed and broken process to switch over employee benefits, followed by the corporation's demand for far-reaching newsroom cuts. If you had one minute to talk with Lee Enterprises CEO Kevin Mowbray, what would you tell him?

Harris: First, I'd want to ask him why he's never held an in-person meeting with staff at The Buffalo News in the three years since Lee acquired us and hopefully get him to see the benefits of such a gathering.

I'd ask him to think back to when he started his career with Lee in 1986 as an advertising sales rep at his hometown in Illinois and try to remember what being an employee in a large news organization felt like. I'd ask him to try to remember how confusing and frustrating it is when you're an employee working as hard as you can but seeing change all around you that doesn't make sense, especially when the larger company doesn't make its strategy clear.

I'd tell him that's how we feel about Lee today, and that he has the ability to change that.

Q: Given the rocky start we've had with Lee Enterprises in 2023, what message do you have for members of the Guild about our future?

Harris: Unfortunately, Lee is undergoing a lot of the same cost cuts, consolidation and centralization that I've seen at other newspaper chains. But I still feel The Buffalo News is a strong operation. This market is unique in so many ways.

We know the population here likes their printed product – that means we have a longer runway than many metro papers to sustain print and try to grow our digital operation. We have the skill among our membership to do that and strong local leadership, but Lee is really making moves that are counterproductive right now. We'll need to stick together to make Lee see that.

Q: What can individual Guild members do to improve their working conditions at The Buffalo News, protect their jobs and co-workers' jobs?

Harris: I've always felt a union is the vehicle by which employees can change their workplace for the better. I see opportunities to make The Buffalo News a better place, and I don't intend to stay quiet

about it. I'd encourage all members to identify opportunities to make their workplace better – in some cases, we may even identify ways to make the business stronger, too – and then share those ideas with the Guild and work with us to make the positive change happen.

It wasn't easy, but look what we've done: Tan reflects on past and future

Article based on the speech given by Past President Sandy Tan at the Guild holiday party in December. Tan stepped down as president of the Guild at the end of 2022 after completing two terms.

This is my last year formally addressing you as Guild president, so I request your indulgence as I reflect on my last six years. It feels so much longer! More than any other time in my 22 years here, this has been a time of transition for the company and for the Guild.



I rarely talk about things I've done in first person because it's rare that I do things truly alone. But I'd like to be a little selfish this evening as I look back.

Since becoming president in 2017:

I've been involved in negotiating two traditional Guild contracts, two Typographical Unit contracts, and four outside print shop contracts.

I've gotten to know one set of News executives during my first round as president and learned to deal with a whole new set, here and in Iowa, during my second term when our paper was sold to Lee.

I worked to help expand the Guild, with our union gaining jurisdiction of the Sun papers and merging with the Typographical Union.

I've had a seat at the table as we negotiated enhanced severance and buyout agreements that have resulted in the loss of members in Classified, Prepress and customer service, as well as the loss of newsroom colleagues.

And I and others have worked to confront the need to develop new strategies and mobilization efforts to adapt to new ownership, and to more effectively reach out to our own members after Covid-19 struck in 2020.

That's a lot. I'm surprised I have any black hair left. But while I'm not sorry to be stepping down, so much of this work has been tremendously fulfilling. I'm proudest of what we stood for – of what we *still* stand for and have fought for.

We made inroads into gaining much needed digital jurisdiction.

We kept freelancers from replacing staff journalists.

We demanded the establishment of online standards to prevent the company from allowing advertising to masquerade as real journalism.

We safeguarded job security, secured raises, and fought for the full and on-time payment of Guild members' expenses and benefits.

We protected a union contract unmatched almost anywhere in the newspaper industry.

And at a time where our parent company keeps so much hidden, our union has offered transparency and light.

To have had a hand in all these things over just six years feels both powerful and humbling.

I've given some fiery speeches during my tenure. I have witnessed Guild members who have cried with relief because of issues the Guild could resolve for them. I also have sat with Guild members who cried because they were facing the loss of their jobs and needed the Guild to make that transition easier.

Times ahead may be hard, but we still have power to create change for the better.

The most recent fiasco with our benefits is a good example. It was the Guild that revealed that employees who "declined" benefits were inadvertently losing their flex benefits money because they didn't select the "opt out" option and didn't realize there was a difference.

When we asked the company how they would make this right, managers initially said they weren't sure what the company would do, that they were busy with "a million other things," and that employees had to take some personal responsibility.

It wasn't until the Guild was willing to wage war over the matter that the issue was resolved,

collectively saving countless employees across the Buffalo News hundreds and thousands of dollars.

Some people go through life wondering how much of a difference they've made. It's never been a question for me, nor should it be for any Guild member who has played an active role in our union.

Which brings me to my final point: The success of the Guild isn't owned by one person. It's owned by a collective commitment of members who stand for something.

In many ways, we as a Guild are more powerful than our own managers. They can offer feedback and input, but ultimately they must take their marching orders from above. When Guild leaders speak with the company, we speak as equals, bound and protected by a contract that I'm proud to add my name to.

No matter what we've lost, that still remains.

That's why I'm so grateful to the people who came before me, who helped open a path for me and others who play major roles in the Guild now. It's why I'm grateful to those who – knowing what lies ahead – have agreed to sacrifice their time and energy to safeguard what we have and to grow where we can.

It's fantastical to imagine I could have played a meaningful role in this time of transition without the support, feedback and hard work of others who rarely get the attention they deserve.

(Tan asks Guild administrators, current and former officers, bargaining team members and committee members to stand.)

That's a lot of us. Thanks to all of you for what you've done to get us here today. We are also doing some musical chairs with the leadership team.

(Tan recognizes incoming Guild officers.)

Last but not least, I'd like to recognize Jon Harris, who takes over as president on Jan. 1. He's been an invaluable member of the Executive Committee and has already made a strong mark on this union. I look forward to seeing him grow into his own leadership role.

For active Guild members who haven't yet had the chance to be recognized, I hope that day will come for you.

There is a Guild coffee mug that some of us still have on our desks. It has the Guild logo on one side, and on the other, the phrase, "The stronger the better."

Our Guild is stronger because we've worked collectively to make it that way. That's why I have faith in the future. I have optimism that no matter what confronts us down the road, the Guild will always be there to straighten and widen the path.

Major Guild happenings since fall 2022

- **November 2022** – New officers elected by Executive Committee to begin Jan. 1: Jon Harris, president; Steve Watson, VP of contract enforcement; Aaron Besecker, VP of mobilization and communication; Treasurer Alva Hill; Secretary Mike McAndrew. New Guild contracts successfully negotiated for Hodgins and Gallagher print shops. Outsourcing of Classified Advertising work to Lee-owned hub results in contract violation and grievance.
- **December 2022** – Sandy Tan steps down as Guild president, Lee Enterprises rolls out rushed and confusing new open enrollment process resulting. Inadequate communication results in numerous mistakes processing benefits, resulting in immediate Guild intervention. Guild shares survey results outlining Guild workplace concerns related to move to new office space at Larkin at Exchange building.
- **January 2023** – Guild intercedes in benefits changeover fiasco that results in many Guild members being denied proper health insurance benefits, losing flex credits, and needing to correct W-4 forms. Four grievances filed as the company struggles to fix problems.
- **February 2023** – Guild informed that the company must save \$1 million from the newsroom, resulting in the abolishment of four open Guild positions and retirement of three Guild reporters. Lee also informs the Guild of its desire to furlough non-production Guild members earning more than \$20/hour for two weeks through September. Executive Committee unanimously rejects the furlough request but will allow Guild members to volunteer for furloughs if they are interested.

Guild offers fond farewell to three veteran reporters



Guild reporters Bob McCarthy, left, Susan Martin and Matt Spina have collectively devoted nearly a century of experience to The Buffalo News newsroom and to the community. (Photo by Guild photographer Derek Gee)

In February, the Guild said goodbye to three highly respected, veteran reporters. They voluntarily retired and received contractual severance as a result of cost cutting measures by Lee Enterprises. Together, Bob McCarthy, Susan Martin and Matt Spina leave with a century of News experience. We wish them all the best in retirement.

Here's what they gave to The Buffalo News during their long careers.

Guild member **Susan Martin** came to The News in 1985, owning the Home & Style section for decades with her stories on decorating, gardening, fashion and entertaining. She also wrote a weekly column "From the Homefront" for more than a decade. An email from management described her this way: "Style at The News has been synonymous with Susan Martin."

A political reporting legend and columnist, **Bob McCarthy** retires after working at The News for 41 years. An email from management described him as "one of the most powerful journalists to ever work in Buffalo." It went on to say, "If you were a politician whose job included representing Western New York, you either feared him or respected him, but no one dared to ignore him." An admired professional and colleague, he won respect and accountability from elected leaders of all political stripes.

Investigative reporter **Matt Spina** retires after nearly 19 years at The News. In that time, Matt dug deeply into a myriad of issues, including governmental failures, political malfeasance, the mental health system, police misconduct and cruelty behind bars. "With deep sources and a keen talent for shaking loose tell-all government documents, Matt has helped shine a spotlight where public officials often didn't want it," managers said.

Comings & Goings from The Buffalo News/Sun papers

Comings

Joshua Bessex/Editorial - photo

Goings

Jasmine Beal/District Manager - PT
Andrea Hayes/District Manager - PT
Daniel Leo/District Manager - PT
Susan Martin/Editorial

Bob McCarthy/Editorial
Mark Mulville/Editorial - photo
Derrick Owens/District Manager - PT
Dan Shanahan/District Manager - FT
Matthew Spina/Editorial
Bob Siuda/Editorial

Upcoming meetings

The next general membership meeting will be held April 12. Meeting time and format to be announced. The next Executive Committee meetings are scheduled for March 13 and April 10. For more meeting dates/times, visit: buffaloguild.org

Meeting Minutes

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes: Oct. 10, 2022

President Sandy Tan called the executive committee meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Some members attended in person in a conference room on the second floor of The Buffalo News building and some attended remotely via Zoom. Those attending in person enjoyed Guild-provided pizza and bottled water.

Motion/Second/Carried Harrington/McAndrew to approve the Sept. 12 executive committee meeting minutes.

M/S/C Sommer/McAndrew to approve the Sept. 14 general membership meeting minutes.

President's Report

Tan announced that Editorial delegate Jon Harris is willing to run in the upcoming Guild officer elections for the position of president that she plans to vacate at the end of this year. Tan also said that ABC steward Alva Hill is in line to replace Hilary Osborn as treasurer. Tan thanked both for their willingness to serve. She said other people have agreed to take on other Guild posts and said nominations for all officer positions are due next month.

Tan then brought up the planned move of departments from the office building at One News Plaza to new space in the Larkin @ Exchange building. Tan said the various departments would move over the course of this week and next. Tan said she was hopeful the Guild would have access to at least one file drawer in the new office space.

Mobilization Report

Vice President of Mobilization Aaron Besecker said the latest edition of the Frontier Reporter would come out later in October. He said he has two profiles of Guild members coming out soon and he is looking for recommendations for other members to profile.

Besecker also noted that he sent out an email with downtown Buffalo restaurant recommendations from Editorial's Andrew Galarneau, The News' restaurant critic. He said 70% of recipients opened the email, which is at or a little higher than the typical click rate for Guild emails.

Grievance Report

Vice President of Contract Administration Scott Scanlon said he's prepared grievances to file over issues with vacation days and float days, as detailed during the September executive committee and general membership meetings, and is ready to send them to management soon.

Scanlon said he planned to send an email to The News, again, raising concerns about sports betting content. And he said he will send a separate email to management regarding a tweet sent from the Buffalo News account about Lloyd Taco Factory that was not identified as coming from the advertising department.

Scanlon also raised a concern about a special advertising section on Wellness that was labeled as sponsored content but the label was very difficult to read. Tan urged Scanlon to send a note of complaint to Tammy Barnes-Turnbull, The News' vice president of human resources and labor relations, because The News has dealt with a similar issue before with Buffalo magazine when the Guild pointed it out.

Old Business

Tan said the Buffalo Guild is planning to send at least three executive committee members to Guild officer training hosted by the Albany Guild later this month: Harris, Secretary Steve Watson and District Manager co-steward Rick Wiorkowski. Other members are welcome to go as well, she said, but would need to let her or Administrative Officer Kim Leiser know soon.

M/S/C Besecker/Scanlon to send Harris, Watson, Wiorkowski and anyone else interested to the Guild officer training in

Albany and to cover the cost of travel expenses, hotel stay and meals.

New Business

Leiser and Tan reviewed the proposed 2022-23 Guild budget as it compares to the budget for the fiscal year that ended on Sept. 30.

Highlights include:

- We projected taking in \$100,000 in Guild dues in 2021-22 but ended up taking in \$130,000 because The News filled some positions and hired summer interns. But to continue to be cautious, given the number of people who leave and aren't replaced, the Guild budgeted to bring in \$100,000 for the new fiscal year in dues.
- The Guild brought in \$1,400 from the Chicago local for bookkeeping work that Leiser performs for that organization. She expects to do about \$6,000 in work for them this coming year.
- The Guild last year proposed using \$73,000 from its general reserve fund to balance its budget but ended up using \$30,000. For the new year, it budgets using \$78,000 from this fund, though as with last year the Guild will use less from its reserves if it brings in more revenue than anticipated from other categories or if expenses end up being lower.
- Total anticipated revenue is \$187,000.
- The Guild estimates that it will owe \$38,000 in "per-cap" dues to the national News Guild, money the local is required to pay to the national organization. The national Guild raises this per-member amount every April, but the Buffalo Guild has fewer members than it did this past April, so the \$38,000 figure is our best estimate.
- The rent for the Guild office is rising to \$425 per month, or \$5,100 for the year, but the good thing is that rate is locked in for the next three years and the building is within walking distance of the Larkin @ Exchange building, Leiser said.
- \$1,200 for Leiser's cell phone plan for the year. The device also serves as the Wi-Fi hotspot for the Guild office.
- \$500 for office supplies and \$130 to host our website.
- The Guild spent more than \$900 last year on postage and mailings, mainly because it had an unusual number of mailings and the cost of sending out the gift cards and face masks around the holidays last year was more expensive than a typical mailing. This year, \$400 is budgeted for that expense.
- The Guild budgeted \$1,000 to purchase a new laptop for Leiser because her computer is 10 years old and out of date, Tan said.
- All office-related expenses are \$10,221.
- The Guild spent \$94,300 on employee and officer expenses, primarily Leiser's salary, benefits, payroll taxes and other charges. Leiser receives the same raises provided in the Guild contract with The News. A small portion of this cost goes to officer stipends, which haven't changed in years, Tan said. The Guild budgets \$99,975 in this category for the new budget. Leiser said she's shopping around for a better health insurance plan.
- Professional fees are budgeted at \$5,600, conventions and conferences (Tan said she wants to invest in more in-person training for current and future Guild officers) at \$7,000 and negotiations and mobilization at \$13,000, the latter primarily for lost time for employees doing Guild work during their regular work hours.
- Social activities are budgeted at \$11,725.
- Total expenses are budgeted at \$187,000.

Leiser said the Guild tries to be judicious in its spending. The Guild's general fund, essentially a checking account from which it projects spending \$78,000 to balance the budget, has about \$102,000 in it now, she said. The finance committee recommended moving some of this money into an online savings account that would generate interest.

This is not the Guild's defense fund, which has \$1,050,000 in it and is held in a mutual fund, Leiser said. The Prepress unit has its own defense fund of \$205,000. Both values were as of Aug. 31.

Tan thanked the finance committee members for their hard work: Leiser, Hill, Editorial's Dave Robinson and District Manager co-steward Jason Kremblas.

Editorial delegate Mike McAndrew raised a question about whether the Guild's general fund will run out if it keeps tapping the fund to balance its budget.

Leiser said the Guild previously only had a few thousand dollars in its general fund and would have to tap its defense fund whenever it needed additional money. That money, Tan said, generally came from interest earned on the Guild's investments and not from the principle.

The Guild hasn't had to touch the defense fund in at least four years because of this surplus in the general fund. Once the funds in this checking account run out, the executive committee and the finance committee will have to look at how it best wants to address that, Tan and Leiser said.

The Guild's view has been, when it needs to take a strong position during contract negotiations, to push back against undesirable proposals, it makes sense to tap into the general or defense funds, Tan said. That's what they're there for and not many Guilds can boast a \$1 million defense fund, she said.

Leiser said, there was a time previously when the Guild had depleted its general fund and, at that time, Guild leadership had significantly cut back on spending, including spending on basic activities such as social events and meeting refreshments.

Some officers wondered, if we're not going to spend money on those items, what was the point, Leiser said. So the thinking shifted to, while still acting prudently, let's spend money to strengthen the Guild while we have the ability to do that, Robinson added.

M/S/C Watson/Osborn to approve the 2022-23 Guild budget. Also under new business, Tan asked Watson to organize a happy hour saying goodbye to the old building and hello to the new building. Watson said he was working on a date and location and coordinating with News management in case they want to chip in and open it up to non-Guild employees to attend.

M/S/C Scanlon/Wiorkowski approved spending up to \$500 on the happy hour.

Tan noted that the mother of Editorial's Jeff Miers was reported to be gravely ill. She suggested, if appropriate, spending money on a floral arrangement sent to Miers in the Guild's name.

M/S/C Sommer/Kremblas to approve purchasing the arrangement if appropriate.

The executive committee will next meet on Nov. 7.

Tan adjourned the meeting at 7:08 p.m.

Attendance (in person): President Sandy Tan, Secretary Steve Watson, Vice President Contract Administration Scott Scanlon, Editorial delegate Mike Harrington, Editorial delegate Mark Sommer, Editorial delegate Jon Harris, Editorial delegate Mike McAndrew, District Manager co-steward Rick Wiorkowski, District Manager co-steward Jason Kremblas.

Attendance (remote): Vice President Mobilization Aaron Besecker, Administrative Officer Kim Leiser, Treasurer/Typographical nightside steward Hilary Osborn, Typographical nightside steward Mark Hanover, Editorial delegate David Robinson, ABC steward Alva Hill.

Excused: None

Absent: Sun Newspapers steward Francesca Bond, Inside Circulation steward Melissa Burrowes, Editorial delegate Rachel Lenzi, Editorial nightside steward Mike Pesarchick.

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes: Nov. 7, 2022

President Sandy Tan called the executive committee meeting to order via Zoom at 5:33 p.m.

Motion/Second/Carried Sommer/Harrington to approve the Oct. 10 executive committee meeting minutes.

President's Report

Tan said the Guild would send out a survey seeking members' opinions and feedback on the move into the new office space at Larkinville.

Tan said Sean Kirst, a columnist in Editorial, rounded up a number of framed awards and plaques given to newsroom employees that had been left in the old building during the move. The Guild will assist in getting them distributed to the recipients.

Tan said the Guild executive committee will have to decide whether to meet in person, remotely or on a hybrid basis in the future.

In-person or hybrid meetings would require finding a space in which to meet in the new building.

Tan also said the executive committee needs to set the 2023 meeting schedule.

Mobilization Report

Vice President of Mobilization and Communication Aaron Besecker said the latest edition of the Frontier Reporter was sent to members electronically last week. He said he's also been keeping up with online posts and email lists and the Buffalo Guild has been doing a lot of social media posts in support of the Pittsburgh Guild, which is on strike.

Tan noted the Frontier Reporter still needed to be posted on Guild bulletin boards in various locations.

Grievance Report

Vice President of Contract Administration and Enforcement Scott Scanlon said on Oct. 18 he filed a grievance related to when vacation time vests for News employees.

Administrative Officer Kim Leiser met with Tammy Barnes-Turnbull, The News' vice president of human resources and labor relations, who agreed the Guild's interpretation of the vacation language in the contract was correct.

Scanlon filed another grievance in October arguing Guild members are entitled to five float days after working three months at The News, instead of having to work a full year to earn the full number of float days.

However, The Buffalo News has been prorating float days since the mid-2000s. The contract doesn't call for prorating float days, but The News argues it's a case of past practice. The Guild for now is withdrawing the grievance.

Scanlon said there are continuing issues, going back at least a year, with the failure to properly label sponsored content or advertising. Scanlon said he sent a letter to The News and to Lee Enterprises executives outlining several concerning examples, including Homefinder real-estate listings that were tucked into our news feed and a post touting Lloyd Taco Factory on The News' Twitter account that were not labeled as advertising. The Guild is not filing a formal grievance, yet, but this is the first time we've raised these labeling concerns directly with Lee, Scanlon said. It's part of a "troubling pattern," he said, that the grievance committee is watching closely.

The Guild also remains concerned about some of the classified advertising work, previously performed by Media Sales Plus, that was sent to a Lee hub in Indiana. The Guild believes this violates a provision in the contract. The News argues the provision applied to Berkshire Hathaway but not to Lee.

Scanlon said the grievance committee voted to file a grievance over the matter and he will file one soon.

Tan noted the administrative assistant for the editor and publisher will be performing some work with voting information on election night. She is not a Guild member.

Tan said she raised the issue with Deputy Managing Editor Denise Jewell Gee. The Guild hasn't formally objected to the arrangement and hasn't filed a grievance, Tan said, but wanted to get more information about what she would be doing and whether any of her predecessors did this.

Tan also brought up concerns about not having guest WiFi access in the new building.

Old Business

Tan said the Buffalo Guild sent three executive committee members to Guild officer training hosted by the Albany Guild last month: Editorial delegate Jon Harris, Secretary Steve Watson and District Manager co-steward Rick Wiorkowski.

Wiorkowski, Watson and Harris recapped some of what they learned at the training and Harris provided committee members a write-up of his notes from the sessions.

Tan mentioned the Guild is planning to hold a holiday party for the first time in three years.

Leiser said she is looking to pin down a date during the first three weeks of December, a Thursday or Friday, and is trying to find a suitable venue.

Leiser led the committee through a discussion of the costs of the venues she's talked to and sought opinions on how much is appropriate to charge members, retirees and guests for tickets. The committee seemed to reach a consensus around prices of \$10 for members and retirees and \$20 for guests, with the Guild subsidizing the rest of the cost.

Tan said she's planning to meet with the three independent print shops represented by the Guild that have expired contracts.

New Business

Tan talked about how the Buffalo Guild can support the members of the Pittsburgh Guild who are on strike. The Guild already has paid for lunch for one day for the strikers.

Tan said the Communication Workers of America wants any donated funds to go to a CWA strike fund.

Tan noted we have \$94,000 in our checking account and asked members how much they are comfortable donating to the Pittsburgh strikers.

Following an extensive discussion, M/S/C Watson/Harris to donate \$5,000 now to the CWA strike fund with additional funds to come later following another committee vote.

Committee members also discussed sending a small delegation down to Pittsburgh to walk the picket line with Guild members to show our support for the strike. Editorial delegate Mike McAndrew had expressed interest in going, as did Tan.

M/S/C Watson/McAndrew to cover the costs of sending members down to Pittsburgh to join the picket line for a day.

Tan then kicked off nominations for Guild officer positions.

Tan nominated Harris for a three-year term as president. With no other nominations, Watson cast one ballot for Harris to elect him by acclamation.

For vice president of contract administration and enforcement, Scanlon nominated Watson to serve a three-year term in the post. There were no other nominations, and Watson was elected by acclamation.

Harris nominated Besecker for another three-year term as vice president of mobilization and communication. There were no other nominations and one ballot was cast for Besecker's election.

Watson nominated McAndrew to serve a three-year term as secretary. With no other nominations, McAndrew was elected by acclamation.

Tan nominated ABC Steward Alva Hill to serve as treasurer. With no other nominations, one ballot was cast for her election.

Tan then went through the list of steward positions to be filled. Tan said Hill, Typographical steward Mark Hanover and Inside Circulation steward Melissa Burrowes all have agreed to continue in their roles.

When she added that Editorial nightside steward Mike Pesarchick also would continue in his role, Pesarchick spoke up to respectfully decline. Pesarchick is retired but works

part-time and feels a full-time employee should have the job. He agreed to try to find his replacement.

Wiorkowski and fellow DM steward Jason Kremblas also agreed to continue in their posts.

Watson cast one ballot to elect the stewards by acclamation.

For executive committee members, Tan said Scanlon would serve as an Editorial delegate along with incumbents Mike Harrington and Dave Robinson, with Editorial's Libby March, Mark Sommer and Rachel Lenzi willing to serve as alternates.

They were elected by acclamation.

Kremblas, Harris and Harrington agreed to serve on a subcommittee to look at updating some of the Guild bylaws as they relate to leadership positions.

McAndrew said he thought it would be important to open a line of communication with other unions at The News. Leiser and Tan said a group known as the Council of Newspaper Unions hasn't met in years, since Henry Davis was Guild president. McAndrew said he thought the respective union presidents need to be able to talk to each other. Leiser said she would try to track down a list of presidents with contact information for all of them.

The executive committee will next meet on Dec. 12.

Tan adjourned the meeting at 7:24 p.m.

Attendance: Vice President Mobilization and Communication Aaron Besecker, Inside Circulation steward Melissa Burrowes, Editorial delegate Mike Harrington, Editorial delegate Jon Harris, ABC steward Alva Hill, District Manager co-steward Jason Kremblas, Administrative Officer Kim Leiser, Editorial delegate Mike McAndrew, Editorial nightside steward Mike Pesarchick, Editorial delegate David Robinson, Vice President Contract Administration and Enforcement Scott Scanlon, Editorial delegate Mark Sommer, President Sandy Tan, Secretary Steve Watson, District Manager co-steward Rick Wiorkowski.

Excused: Editorial delegate Rachel Lenzi, Treasurer Hilary Osborn

Absent: Sun Newspapers steward Francesca Bond, Typographical steward Mark Hanover.

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes: Dec. 12, 2022

Present in person: Editorial delegate and President-elect Jon Harris, Editorial delegate Mike Harrington, Administrative Officer Kim Leiser, Editorial delegate Rachel Lenzi, Editorial delegate and Secretary-elect Mike McAndrew, Vice President Contract Administration and Enforcement Scott Scanlon, President Sandra Tan, District Manager co-steward Rick Wiorkowski.

Present on Zoom: Vice President Mobilization and Communication Aaron Besecker, Erik Bridenbaker, ABC steward and Treasurer-elect Alva Hill, Libby March, Treasurer Hilary Osborn, Editorial delegate Dave Robinson, Secretary and Vice President-elect Steve Watson, Trey Wydysh.

Excused: Editorial nightside steward Mike Pesarchick, Editorial delegate Mark Sommer.

Absent: Sun Newspapers steward Francesca Bond, Inside Circulation steward Melissa Burrowes, Typographical steward Mark Hanover, District Manager co-steward Jason Kremblas.

Tan calls the meeting to order at 5:37 p.m.

Motion to approve minutes of Nov. 7 executive committee meeting: Besecker moves to approve. Harrington seconds. Motion carried.

Mobilization Committee report by Besecker:

Besecker: Asks Executive Committee for guidance on what communications should be sent to members of the Guild Alumni Chapter.

Tan: Guild updated its list of retirees who paid \$25 to national TNG/CWA to be official members of the Guild Alumni Chapter. Before that, retirees weren't getting emails or texts or any communications from the Guild. One of the things we promised alums if they signed up to the Alumni Chapter was we'd keep them in the loop on what's going on in the Guild.

Harrington suggested Alumni Chapter members don't need to get every communication sent to Guild members by the Guild. Wiorkowski suggested sending Alumni Chapter members the minutes of our executive committee meetings every month. Besecker noted minutes of the executive committee are published on the Guild website, so they're public.

Tan said Alumni Chapter members should be sent communications about Guild social events, The Frontier Reporter, notices about major issues the Guild is concerned about. She suggested that Besecker use his judgment based on the guidance of executive committee members.

Besecker noted that Tan will be the Frontier Reporter editor in 2023. Tan said the Frontier Reporter editor is not an elected Guild position. The editor post has been vacant for some time.

Grievance Committee report by Scanlon:

Paid content that looks like news on buffalonews.com: Scanlon said about a week or so ago, he emailed Buffalo News Human Resources Director Tammy Turnbull and Lee Enterprises VP Astrid Garcia about real estate listings (paid content) masquerading as news stories on buffalonews.com. They said they'd look into this and respond in a week. As of this morning, he had not heard back from Turnbull or Garcia.

Classified Advertising/Media Sales Plus grievance: Leiser said she had a grievance meeting with Turnbull and Garcia to discuss this issue. When the Guild positions in classified advertising were bought out and the work was outsourced to Media Sales Plus, the Guild contract stated that if The Buffalo News could not in the future have employees of The Buffalo News, BH Media or subsidiaries do this work unless it reverted back to Guild jurisdiction. The company claims it has not hired anyone to do any classified advertising work that was previously Guild jurisdiction. Scanlon has anecdotal information that Lee did hire someone he knows, in addition to a former Guild member from classified advertising who was rehired and whose first day was Dec. 11, 2022. Leiser said we have to prove they are actually doing the work that Guild members in classified used to do.

Wifi grievance: Scanlon said we have talked with Turnbull and Garcia about ongoing wifi access problems experienced by Guild members. Everyone, including Garcia, thinks this should not be a problem. She agreed with us that Guild members need access to wifi on their personal phones to do their jobs, he said. Management is aware our contract states we are entitled to the equipment needed to do our jobs. Tan suggested the executive committee authorize a grievance to be filed if the problem is not resolved soon. Leiser said it sounds like a direct violation of the equipment section of the contract. Scanlon said he talked with The Buffalo News' IT manager who said there are a couple of problems. One is the security software Lee is requiring. The other is that the cell service is not very good in the Larkinville area. Besecker said he knows of one reporter who is no longer working in newsroom, is working remote, because of the poor cell phone service and poor wifi service.

Motion to authorize the filing of a grievance over the wifi access made by Scanlon, Harris second. Motion carried.

President's Report by Tan:

Typographical Unit: Tan said that when the Guild merged with the Typographical Union, it inherited their money. Much of the money was in the Typo Unit's defense fund. The Guild promised the Typo Unit that any decisions about what to do with that money would be made by a finance committee that included Typographical Unit members. Level Financial's position is that the funds the Typo Union was invested in were super aggressive. It was invested 100% in stock, 0% in bonds. Level Financial thinks a 50/50 split is a better investment plan. Even if we keep it invested 100% in stocks, the investments should be in more diversified funds with lower costs. They are invested in Homestead Stock funds that are very expensive and are not as diversified.

Osborn said the Homestead stocks have been the investment for a long time. She trusts Level Financial and is comfortable with their advice. Tan said she can't foresee when we would spend this money because it's supposed to be used to benefit Typo Unit members.

Guild survey: The Guild surveyed members after The Buffalo News moved in mid-October to Larkinville to get their views on the new main office. The top concern of Guild members was technology/internet/cell access. 81% identified that as a top concern. Workplace culture/togetherness was cited as a top concern by 42%.

There was a question, "Do you like glass panels on cubicles?" 54.9% said they don't, and that was the vast majority of Guild members who work most of their time in the newsroom.

Tan included recommendations to management in the survey report, but had not sent management the report yet.

Go to www.buffaloguild.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Guild-survey-on-Larkinville-move.pdf to see the full survey report.

Guild Holiday Party update: Leiser said as of now, 70 tickets have been sold. The party is Thursday, Dec. 15. Lenzi said there will be a GIF photo booth at the party where people can pose for photos with props. She worked on it with Libby March.

Old Business

Print shop contracts: Tan said two Guild Contracts were negotiated with local print shops where the Guild represents workers, at Gallagher Printing and Hodgins Printing. The contracts and summary letters were sent to the executive committee in emails.

Tan read highlights and moved to approve the Guild contract with Gallagher Printing, a two-year contract. Second by Wiorkowski. Motion carried.

Tan read highlights and moved to approve the Hodgins Printing three-year contract, which covers 2 Guild members, one of which is the print shop's owner. Second by Scanlon. Motion carried.

Tan said the Guild is still trying to negotiate a new contract for Guild represented workers at a third print shop, Delft Printing.

New Business

Bylaw changes: Harris said a committee that studied the Guild bylaws recommends some changes. The bylaw language hasn't been updated since 2016. We have a few new departments and fewer members. Tan explained we want to make sure each of the 3 district offices with circulation district managers has its own steward. Also recommended is that newsroom dayside steward be changed to steward for different newsroom units, whether they work day or night.

Motion by McAndrew to approve bylaw changes as proposed, with amendment to add one steward spot to represent Guild members in sports and photo departments. Motion seconded and approved.

Wydysh agreed to be steward for city desk/fin/design/digital desk units. Harrington agreed to be steward for sports/photo.

Guild stipends: Tan said that after consulting with Osborn, she is making a recommendation about stipends to be paid to Guild officers and stewards in 2023. Tan recommended stipend changes, with the change in the amount budgeted from 2022 in parenthesis.

President: \$5,000 (no change)
Two VPs: \$2,500 (no change)
Treasurer: \$2,000 (decrease of \$500)
Webmaster/Frontier Reporter Editor: \$800 (no change)
Secretary: \$700 (up \$200)
Classified steward: \$0 (decrease of \$300)
Inside Circulation steward: \$300 (no change)
District Manager steward 1: \$300 (no change)
District Manager steward 2: \$300 (up \$300)
District Manager steward 3: \$300 (up \$300)
Newsroom dayside steward: \$0 (decrease of \$50)
Newsroom nightside steward: \$0 (decrease of \$50)

Prepress steward: \$0 (no change)
Sun Papers steward: \$0 (no change)
Accounting steward: \$0 (no change)
Outside print shop steward 1: \$0 (no change)
Outside print shop steward 2: \$0 (no change)
Total: \$14,700 (decrease of \$100)

Tan recommended no department steward with fewer than three full-time equivalent Guild members receives a stipend unless the individual also occupies another stipend position; No officer is entitled to also receive a steward stipend; No editorial stewards are entitled to a steward stipend if editorial members occupy 3 or more officer seats. Leiser and some others said there should be some compensation for all stewards. It doesn't have to be \$300, she said. It could be less, but there should be something. Executive committee consensus was it wanted more time to think about the recommended stipends.

Open Enrollment: Tan said The Buffalo News/Lee Enterprises rollout of open enrollment for health benefits in 2023 was a good example of why we need a union. She asked the company for info about how Principal 401(K) investment options compare with the new Empower 401(K) investment options. She distributed a chart provided by the company that compares the two. Level Financial to do a Zoom call on Wednesday, Dec. 14 for Guild members and other Buffalo News employees. Leiser said she has asked the company for info on whether all Guild members have signed up for health benefits. Besecker said last year's open enrollment lasted 13 days, longer than this year. Hill said the Lee benefits website opt out vs decline coverage issue is troubling. If you decline coverage, you don't get the flex credits. Also if you don't upload proof for dependents, it kicks you out and switches you to single coverage, she said.

Executive committee meeting calendar for 2023: Besecker moved to make the executive committee meetings the 2nd Monday of each month. Seconded by several people. Motion carried.

Pittsburgh strike relief: TNG/CWA has organized a Strike Santa for members of the striking Pittsburgh Newspaper Guild. We can purchase gifts requested by striking members. Tan moved we donate \$500 to the Strike Santa fund, but restrict spending to only for necessities. Motion carried.

Fort Worth Star-Telegram strike relief: Besecker moved to donate \$1,000 to a strike relief fund for striking members of the guild at the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. Second by Harris. Motion approved.

Non-editorial staff contributing editorial content: Members discussed concerns about non-editorial and non-Guild employees working on editorial content. On May 14, after the mass shooting, Buffalo News VP of Business Development Brian Connolly helped edit copy. On Election Night, Executive Assistant to the Editor Emily Merkel contributed online charts for election coverage for online content on buffalonews.com. Then during the November snowstorm, Connolly wrote a story published online on buffalonews.com.

Thank you to executive committee: In her last executive committee meeting as president after 6 years in that position, Tan thanked Guild officers, incoming Guild officers and other members of the executive committee.

Tan adjourned meeting at 8:08 p.m.