



The Frontier Reporter

Spring  Edition 2025

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“It was a revelation to witness the preparations for bargaining, the way we all were routinely informed of where the paper stood economically – then to see how much those hard-won contracts mattered in our lives, especially at a time when difficult changes were sweeping across so many papers in the Great Lakes corridor.” – columnist Sean Kirst (more inside)

“There’s a lot fewer of us now. But I’m still just as proud to be on this staff, and I love reading the paper every day as much as ever.” – Bills sports writer Mark Gaughan (more inside)

Guild battles with Lee during snowstorms, cyberattack

By Jon Harris – In the face of lake-effect snowstorms that hampered newspaper delivery and a companywide cyberattack that brought down Lee servers, the Guild leadership team has worked aggressively and successfully to regain lost compensation and end unfair work practices that threatened our members, particularly in Circulation.

The weekend of Saturday, November 30, and Sunday, Dec. 1, last year showed exactly why it was a terrible idea for Lee Enterprises to move printing of The Buffalo News three hours away to Cleveland, Ohio.

What transpired that weekend are the kinds of headaches that occur when a company makes decisions solely motivated by the pursuit of profit and without thinking about the impact its actions have on its most valuable assets: its employees.

As it always does, the Guild quickly got involved to minimize the damage to our district managers when the newspapers could not arrive in Western New York from Cleveland because of snow along Lake Erie and the Thruway. (Breaking news: It often snows along Lake Erie, much to the surprise of Lee executives.)

On each day when the papers couldn’t get here, News management told district managers scheduled to work that day that they could not come in and had to use up a float day, use a vacation day, take the day off without any pay, or make up the time within seven days.

We weren’t going to stand for that.

By 8 a.m. Monday, Dec. 2, Guild Administrative Officer Kim Leiser dashed off an email to Tammy Turnbull, informing her that “we have a problem” because the company was improperly applying the inclement weather policy. Kim argued that the policy does not apply when the company is unable to get papers here, especially when the weather in Western New York was not preventing district managers from reporting to work.

By 2 p.m. that same day, the Guild leadership team had ironed out a solution with the company. The Guild and the company reached a memorandum of understanding that allowed district managers to use their available sick time to ensure they were paid for the days when the papers couldn’t arrive from Cleveland.

The union did consult with a labor law expert, who mentioned limitations in what the Guild could legally demand.

With that in mind, the union felt it was a good short-term solution to allow district managers to tap into their larger sick bank rather than being required to draw from their limited, annual vacation or floats.

What this incident also made the company and the union realize is that our current inclement weather policy is not sufficient as written, especially because the weather here could be perfectly fine even if it's blizzarding in Cleveland (or vice-versa).

Knowing this is exactly why the union pushed for district managers to get “snow days” in bargaining last year with Lee, but the company stubbornly refused to consider it. We did iron out a provision for remote work for district managers, but the company has failed to utilize that new option.

Before the next winter season, we will have a memorandum of understanding formalized with the company. As it stands, however, we have successfully achieved a basic understanding with the company that in instances when the papers can't get here from Cleveland, district managers scheduled that day will still report to their office.

There, they can do other tasks that need tending, such as making calls and cleaning the warehouses.

Importantly, that also ensures that they'll be paid for that day of work and not have to burn through their paid time off.

The cybersecurity attack that crippled Lee Enterprises through much of March also presented some hurdles. But the union again quickly stepped in to ensure district managers who were scheduled to work were paid.

In addition, the union also kept pressure on the company to expedite fixing its accounts payable system so employee expenses could be reimbursed. As president, I was regularly emailing back and forth with Astrid Garcia, Lee's vice president of HR and legal, to stay on top of the issue and get updates.

The Unions of Lee Enterprises, a coalition of unionized Lee papers, echoed the Buffalo Newspaper Guild's insistence that the company reimburse members for all expenses, plus any incurred interest and penalties resulting from payment delays.

The delay in the expense reimbursements affected all employees who incur expenses while fulfilling their jobs. In the newsroom, some sports reporters were waiting on thousands of dollars to be reimbursed, incurring credit card interest in the meantime. The district managers and photojournalists, meanwhile, were waiting on several hundreds of dollars in mileage reimbursement.

As of mid-April, expenses were again being regularly reimbursed and any members who reported credit card interest to the Guild have gotten that interest covered.

Veteran Bills writer Mark Gaughan reaches the end zone and reflects on journalism lessons he never forgot

By Mark Gaughan – I was intimidated when I first walked into The Buffalo News. It was early September 1981. I had been hired as a 20-hour-a-week clerk in the sports department. There were a lot of famous journalists at The News who I revered, people like Larry Felser, Foster Spencer, Lee Coppola, Ray Hill, John Dwyer and others.

Eight months later, I got my first of two internships at The News, and I felt a lot of pressure to try to earn my place among all the veteran journalists on the massive third floor. This is going to take everything I've got and a little more, I said to myself many times in those days.

Now it's 43 1/2 years later. Because of our exhaustive coverage of the Bills, I figure I've written about 12,000 byline stories, counting all those blogs from 1999 to 2016 (which are lost to the internet ether). Some of them turned out just the way I wanted, some didn't. Some Bills followers liked what I had to write; some didn't. (I have angry fan mail to prove it.)

But I can say one thing: I never mailed it in. Not one day. And it's because there's a standard at The News set by a lot of fine journalists. I always felt I had to try to keep up with the quality of my contemporaries, people like Gene Warner, Dan Herbeck, Lou Michel, Donn Esmonde, Sue Schulman, Phil Fairbanks, Bud Anzalone, Barb O'Brien, Jerry Sullivan, Bob Dicesare, Jim McCoy, and on and on and on.

There's a lot fewer of us now. But I'm still just as proud to be on this staff, and I love reading the paper every day as much as ever.



Patrick Lakamp just did a great story on Thurman Thomas’ family. I read Aaron Besecker’s excellent crime reporting and think, thank God my name never has made it into one of his stories. I pay a lot of attention to Jon Harris’ fine health care coverage now that I’m old. Ben Tsujimoto paid a ton of dues to make it in this business, and now he’s writing A1 stories. Toni Ruberto has been a great editor since we worked together in college. Our “lean, mean” editing staff has such a hard job. Chessa Bond is a rising star. And on and on.

Of course, I’m proud of our sports section, which has been voted top 10 in the country so many times.

Perhaps my favorite Buffalo News story, which has been a motivator for me all these years, is this: It was July 1997, a Saturday night. We used to watch the 11 p.m. TV news to make sure they didn’t have a big story we were missing. I was in the office editing. Channel 7 reported the Sabres were hiring Florida Panthers assistant coach Lindy Ruff as head coach. We had nothing on it. At 11:10 p.m.

I called my late, great colleague Jim Kelley. He just got home from a party and knew nothing of it. He said, let me make some calls.

Kelley was the kind of guy who made conversation with everyone, at the coffee shop, with the cleaning ladies, everyone. There were no little people in

Jim’s world. At Sabres practices, he’d chat up the equipment guys and low-level staffers on both teams, people who usually get ignored. They liked Jim. He knew a Panthers equipment guy or trainer. He called and found out Ruff was on vacation in a cabin in Montana; 15 minutes later the guy called with the cabin number.

Jim called. Ruff answered and said, “How did you find me?!?!?”

Ruff confirmed it off the record, Jim wrote up a fast story, got it in by 12:15 a.m. and we got it in the Sunday paper. Jim had pulled an elephant out of a hat. That lesson stuck with me forever, and I have tried my best to be like my great friend Kelley. Engage, engage, engage. Talk to anyone and everyone. It’s amazing what you find out from the most random, innocent conversations, and it’s one of the joys of our profession. After all these years, I still can’t decide what I love more – doing good interviews or sitting down at the laptop to write the story. It’s such a close call.

We’re lucky to do what we do. I’ll be reading every day. Keep up the great work.

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Columnist Sean Kirst reflects on his union roots and offers a final love letter to the Guild

By Sean Kirst – I think I was in maybe my second day at The Buffalo News, in early 2017, when Jay Tokasz, Jay Rey and Henry Davis took me over to Pizza Plant, ordered up some slices and gave me the lowdown about what it meant to join the Buffalo Newspaper Guild.

It took about – oh, say 15 seconds – and I was in.

I’m the son of a steward, raised in a labor household. My dad’s identity on the job was both his work and his belief in the union. Before arriving in Buffalo, during more than 40 years in journalism, I worked for many Upstate newspapers. None were union shops. At points of strain, I witnessed the result.

In some of the newsrooms I knew over that long span, I saw young journalists pressured into working preposterous hours, without overtime. I saw skilled colleagues unexpectedly and jarringly laid off, then required to sign nondisclosure agreements that prevented them from even speaking out about what happened, at least if they wanted severance. I saw reporters, photographers, editors and artists whose careers could be subject to arbitrary upheaval, without redress.

I did not understand how much an effective Guild could do for the precious sense of collective agency until I arrived at The News, where I was offered a job writing regular columns for a paper I had read since I was a little kid. That position was an honor and a gift - an astounding reason for a homecoming I’ll never forget.



Sean Kirst selling Buffalo News Kids Day papers

The feeling of gratitude was only compounded when Henry and the two Jays explained I had the chance to be part of a newspaper guild for the first time in my career. I thought of my dad and what the union meant to my parents and our family. I was quickly appreciative of the camaraderie – the regular meetings and updates, the volunteer community cleanups or selling papers on the street for communal causes, the chance to walk in the Labor Day parade and all the many ways of reinforcing friendships from the newsroom.

Yet I was particularly moved by the essence of why the Guild exists. It was a revelation to witness the preparations for bargaining, the way we all were routinely informed of where the paper stood economically – then to see how much those hard-won contracts mattered in our lives, especially at a time when difficult changes were sweeping across so many papers in the Great Lakes corridor.



Sean Kirst in the old newsroom with editing colleague Mike McAndrew (left), who retired last fall

I mean, I’m retiring with a pension thanks to direct advocacy by the Guild.

There was also deep personal meaning in the way the Guild not only spoke out when concerns about company policy needed to be addressed – but also encouraged us to add our voices to that message.

It simply felt healthy, consistent with what we do as journalists.

For all of it, I’m grateful to everyone who did tireless work in leadership, organizing or mobilization roles within the ranks. The hardest thing about my decision to retire from The News is that in no way am I unhappy: I have deep affection for every colleague in the newsroom (which I hope is reciprocated; believe me, I’m cognizant of my more annoying never-let-it-go tendencies, especially on deadline).

At 65 and closing fast on 66, it is simply one of those crossroads where you realize a particular path makes sense.

That reality doesn’t diminish how much I love this place, or all of you.

In the last nine years, I’ve made friendships I hope to sustain for the rest of my life. I’ve watched first-hand as dedicated colleagues did their best to elevate stories of sacrifice and sheer communal humanity amid such tragedies as the pandemic and the Christmas weekend blizzard and the wounds left by the unspeakable hatred of the racist massacre at Tops.

I’ve witnessed how the women and men in our newsroom routinely dig in to break stories of enormous scope and meaning, then cover them with soul and passion and courage – even during periods of great tumult and uncertainty within our profession.

During our years in the old building, I used to go in and out via the corridor closest to the press, along wooden floors in a space rich with the scent of ink and oil, where women and men in coveralls would catch their breath on a bench. There was something of the eternal in it – it brought me back to my dad, as he left his plant each day – and it was a reminder of what journalism equaled for so long, and still does in a new age:

It is really a form of literary industry, and such extraordinary labor needs a union.

I thank the Guild – meaning each one of you – for the precious chance to be a part of it.

-30-

Florida billionaire makes bid for Lee Enterprises

By Jon Harris – A Florida billionaire wants to buy the parent company of The Buffalo News, though he has not yet submitted a formal offer.

David Hoffmann, whose Hoffmann Family of Companies already owns just under 10% of Lee Enterprises, told Lee executives in March that he wants to have “open discussions” about buying the company.

Further, Lee and Hoffmann entered into a confidentiality agreement on March 24 that allows Hoffmann to get a look at the company’s books and, potentially, formulate an offer with a proposed share price.

While a deal hasn’t yet been brokered, Hoffmann has not been shy about talking to the media.

“Local news and journalism is important to me,” Hoffmann told The Buffalo News in an interview in March. “To me, it’s part of the fabric of America. I’ve had some success in my life, so it’s something that I’d like to invest in and try to preserve, and at the same time, I think we’ll be successful from an investment point of view.”

While that sounds promising, comments Hoffmann made in April to the St. Louis Business Journal gave the Guild some pause about his intentions.

He told the business journal that the St. Louis Post Dispatch and other large newspapers are the “least attractive” part of Lee Enterprises. Hoffmann went on to say that it’s easier to get his hands around the issues at smaller newspapers than at the large newspapers, such as the Post-Dispatch or The Buffalo News.

Lee’s larger newspapers, Hoffman said, are “more complex, and there are more things to deal with than are in these little local markets.” Hoffmann said papers such as the Post-Dispatch carry legacy liabilities.

Reading between the lines, the Guild is concerned that some of those legacy liabilities Hoffmann is referring to may be the union contracts at some of the larger newspapers, including St. Louis and Buffalo.

Simply, it’s easier for him to do what he wants at the smaller, non-unionized newspapers than at the large newspapers with longstanding, strong union contracts.

The jury also is out on Hoffmann’s ability to successfully run a news operation. His Hoffman Media Group owns very small newspapers, and it most recently acquired the Napa Valley Register from Lee last year.

He told the St. Louis Business Journal that his 21 newspapers are all profitable, with margins of around 25%.

The Guild wonders about a profit margin that high. If he’s running profit margins of 25% in newspapers nowadays, we hope it’s not coming at the expense of having fewer employees and/or low-paid staff.

We’ll keep members posted if and when Hoffmann makes a bid for the company.



Major Guild happenings since the Fall/Winter Edition

- **January 2025** – Guild talks with the company about a fairer policy for compensating District Managers who were forced by management to stay home from work because winter storms along Lake Erie affected the ability of print papers in Cleveland to reach Buffalo in November and December, even though weather in Western New York was clear. Executive Committee also approves Guild officers to begin negotiating to represent AFSCME Council 66 union staffers. Committee votes unanimously for Trey Wydysh to serve the unexpired term of retired Guild member Mike McAndrew, subject to general membership approval.
- **February** – Guild and company reach an agreement in principle that, in the future, if District Managers cannot do their jobs because weather-related delays outside of Western New York prevent the arrival of newspapers, even though the weather in the Buffalo area is fine, DMs will still report to their offices and alternate assignments will be found for them. Buffalo News and other Lee papers become victims of a Russia-based ransomware attack that takes down design, customer service and other Lee hub services, temporarily reducing the Buffalo News to a manually designed, two-section newspaper.
- **March** – Guild continues to fight to have Guild member expenses reimbursed after weeks of delays create hardships for members, particularly those with large travel expenses, like district managers and certain Editorial members. The Guild and company reach an agreement in principle that in the case of inclement weather here locally that prevents District Managers from being able to do their jobs, they may use their sick time. Private investor David Hoffmann expresses interest in buying Lee papers.
- **April** – Lee Enterprises freezes/eliminates several open positions at The Buffalo News due to continued revenue shortfalls and ongoing fallout from cyberattack. Expense reimbursements through mid-April finally issued to members. Publisher Tom Wiley resigns to take a new job, with no expectation a new Buffalo News publisher will be named. Guild members participate in Buffalo Waterkeepers cleanup.



Comings & Goings from The Buffalo News/Hamburg Sun

Comings: None	Sean Kirst, Editorial, part time
Goings: Mark Gaughan, Editorial	Myisha Harris, DM - part time

Upcoming meetings

Executive Committee meetings are currently scheduled for the remainder of 2025 as follows: May 12; June 9; July 14; Aug. 11; Sept. 8; Oct. 13; Nov. 10; Dec. 8.

The next general membership meetings are currently scheduled for May 14, Aug. 13 and Nov. 19. For the most up-to-date meeting schedule, visit: buffaloguild.org

Meeting minutes

These approved meeting minutes in the Frontier Reporter are slightly abridged. To view full minutes, visit buffaloguild.org, select “Meeting Minutes” tab and enter the password. If you need the password, email aaron.besecker@gmail.com

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes: Dec. 9, 2024

Attendance: Besecker, Bridenbaker, Brophy, Harris, Leiser, Lenzi, McAndrew, Robinson, Tan, Watson, Wiorkowski, Wydysh

Absent: Harrington (Excused), Kremblas, March, Tsujimoto (Excused)

Call to Order at 5:05 p.m. by Harris

Approval of Minutes

Nov. 11, 2024 minutes – Correction: Guild holiday party is scheduled 6 to 10 p.m., not from 6 p.m. to midnight. Harris motion to approve minutes with correction. Wydysh second. Approved.

President’s Report – Harris

The Guild alerted members last week that their \$600 bonus payments for approving the contract will be in this week’s check. Dan Higgins started today as the new enterprise editor at The News. He will be a Guild member. Bruce Andriatch said he is going through applications for the open GA reporting position. We have not heard an update on the open opinion editor position.

Lee’s earnings report will be released this Thursday.

There was an AI announcement by Lee. It has signed contracts related to AI. So they are starting to seriously get into AI. We’re still waiting on a meeting with Lee VP Astrid Garcia to go over our proposed changes to the company’s AI policy.

Wiorkowski: If you were a Guild member when the contract was ratified, but now are management, are you still eligible for the \$600 bonus?

Leiser: I don’t have an answer for that at the moment

Watson: Will the Guild members who took the recent buyout receive the \$600 bonus?

Harris: Yes.

Mobilization Report – Besecker

We’re still trying to get a revamped mobilization committee up and going. Aaron sent out an email asking for volunteers to join. One person contacted him. He hope to have an informal meeting of the committee this month. Brophy volunteered to remain on the Mobilization Committee.

The Guild has had a Bluesky account for a year. We have about 400 followers.

Tan: Said she will get the fall Frontier Reporter published soon.

Also, Matt Davidson of the Martin Group said the Guild has a \$1,200 credit with them.

Grievance Report – Watson

Nothing to report, except we resolved an issue with a member who went up a step and hadn’t received increased compensation.

Old Business

Update on talks with AFSCME Council 66 – Harris: The Executive Committee told Leiser and I to move forward last month with discussions about accepting AFSCME Council 66 staff as Guild members. We had another meeting with them. Leiser sent draft of an agreement to them around Nov. 26. Marian Needham helped with the framework. Council 66 was presenting the info to their members earlier this month. The only thing to really negotiate was a dues structure. Their dues now are flat, \$10 per paycheck. We need to bring them up to our 1.78% dues.

New Business

District Manager Inclement Weather MOU – Leiser: Last week, we had a snowstorm. Papers did not get from Cleveland to The News, even though the weather here in WNY was OK. The News couldn’t get trucks to Cleveland because the NYS Thruway was closed. The News was of the opinion that the inclement weather policy applies. Their policy is that when papers cannot get to Buffalo and there is no work to be done by DMs, then employees can use personal day, float day or vacation day, or not be paid, and The News doesn’t have to pay them unless they were already at work and The News sends them home.

That’s not what policy says. We went back and forth with Buffalo News HR Director Tammy Turnbull over this. In a one-time only deal, the company was willing to allow DMs to use one day of sick pay in addition to a personal day, float, vacation or no pay. DMs would face no consequence from escalation of complaints that resulted from the weather. The language of the contract refers to when weather prevents DMs from getting to work, but it is silent on what is done when papers can’t get from Cleveland to Buffalo.

DMs were getting notifications from Falcon on their phones all day about subscribers complaining.

We agreed the inclement weather policy as written is inadequate for what we are now facing because of the papers being printed in Cleveland.

The contract refers to a weather related emergency that prevents employees from coming to work. We didn’t negotiate what happens workers can get to work, but the News can’t get the papers from Cleveland to Buffalo.

Executive Committee members raised numerous concerns about the inherent unfairness of the policy, questioned its legality in light of the vague wording and the work done and calls taken by DMs while supposedly “off” work. DM reps also mentioned that many DM’s have little to no vacation time left toward the end of the year. Members discuss the need for a long-term solution and debate pros and cons of use of personal time.

Leiser: The company is allowing DMs to use one sick day, and the other two days you would have to take as vacation days or not get paid.

Leiser: We can try to negotiate a mid-contract MOA that would get added to the contract. We need to have further discussion with the company about this.

2025 Guild meeting dates

Proposed meeting dates:

Executive Committee – Mondays: January 13; February 10; March 10; April 14; May 12; June 9; July 14; August 11; September 8; October 13; November 10; December 8

General Membership – Wednesdays: February 12; May 14; August 13; November 19

Watson motion to approve meeting dates. Besecker second. Approved.

Harris: I want to thank Mike McAndrew for his service to the Buffalo Newspaper Guild. This will be his last meeting as secretary/treasurer. He played a crucial role in negotiating the 2021 contract.

Harris: We have the Guild holiday party this week, Dec. 12. The News’ going away party at Big Ditch is next week, Dec. 16, for employees who left over the course of the year.

Guild Secretary/Treasurer position:

Leiser: Harris can appoint Wydysh. This is a mid-term change. The president appoints a mid-term appointment. It needs to be approved by the Executive Committee and the membership at the next general membership meeting.

Harris: I will put it to the Executive Committee at our next meeting. If it is approved, it is put to the vote of the full membership in February.

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes: Jan. 13, 2025

Attendance: Besecker, Bridenbaker, Harrington, Harris, Kremblas, Leiser, March Robinson, Tan, Watson, Wiorkowski, Wydysh

Absent: Brophy, Lenzi, Tsujimoto (all excused)

Call to Order at 5:05 p.m. by Harris

Approval of Minutes – Tan moves to approve, seconded by Wiorkowski. Approved.

President’s Report – Harris

Lee laid off Rachel Crader and Len LaCara. Local management says no newsroom cuts are planned, yet. Candidates are being interviewed for the open GA reporter position, but we haven’t heard whether they have started reviewing candidates for Opinion Editor.

There have been some issues with insurance in the new year. Dental cards have been mailed. Health insurance issues are being dealt with on a case by case basis. Some people have been notified that their insurance is not active. This is mainly affecting people who switched to a new health plan.

Tan: What do we tell people who have had emergencies and have had to pay out of pocket?

Harris: Save everything and we can take care of it retroactively.

Mobilization Report – Besecker

One new person has joined the mobilization committee. The Guild website has been updated and the latest edition of the Frontier Reporter has been published.

Tan: Hard copies will be posted to billboards soon, and the issue features bios of three of five employees who have taken recent buyouts, updates on the status of Lee Enterprises, etc.

Grievance Report – Watson

Everyone’s slap on the wrist over the Debadrita Sur situation has expired.

Sponsored content found its way on to the homepage, as noticed by a number of reporters in the newsroom and reported on by Jim Heaney in the Investigative Post.

Wydysh: I talked to Tim Kelley at Lee, and it was a mistake by the Lee advertising department.

Regarding a photo of the first baby of the new year in the paper provided by the hospital, instead of a news photographer: It seems as though it was an issue of a photographer not being able to get to the hospital. Management says having a photographer get the photos is preferable, but in the past we have used a provided photo.

Managing Editor Bruce Andriatch asked how the Guild would feel if digital-only columns appeared in the E-Edition of the paper. Committee members express opposition, as E-Edition is meant to be a replica of the print edition.

Old Business

AFSCME Council 66 – Staff representatives presented a unanimous motion to work on a relationship with the Buffalo News Guild. Harris and Leiser met with AFSCME on Dec. 18. AFSCME and Harris and Leiser are working on a draft affiliation agreement.

Leiser: This is still in early stages, but it can be beneficial to us in the long run. AFSCME is very excited about working with us. We will bring a final draft of the agreement to the Executive Committee.

Harris: We are still working out details on dues and how many spots they will get on the Executive Committee. Next month is probably too early to get this done. The agreement could be presented to the Exec. Committee in March.

Inclement Weather Policy – Both sides think we can come to an agreement. It’s not fair to use vacation time. Sick time should probably be used, but not all of a member’s sick time. Leiser is planning to meet with Tammy this week.

Committee members discuss the use of sick days, other compromises, question fairness of requiring members to use sick hours.

Management said no to snow days because they don’t want to pay people not to work. The policy has not worked out the way Lee thought it would. The Thruway is closed more than they thought it would be.

Driving bans were not considered. Vacation time was used when it was clear here, and the time couldn’t be used when there was a big storm in the Southtowns.

Sick time usually reloads on an employee’s anniversary date, but they have not told people that they couldn’t use it.

Discussion ensues about pushing back hard. It’s the company’s fault, so they shouldn’t be forcing members to use their own sick time.

New Business

Holiday Party Recap – Harris: We’ve had a loose discussion that we should have fall and summer gatherings in the Southtowns, and winter gatherings in the Northtowns.

Leiser: The party cost \$5,226, well under what was budgeted. Made sure people who said they weren’t coming got a refund. No shows can get a refund or a credit for next year.

Tan: People who materially suffered beyond the cost of the ticket should be reimbursed.

Tan: Motion to offer refunds to people who couldn't make it and reimburse members who incurred other out of pocket costs because of the weather that night. Seconded by Wydysch. Motion passes.

Mother of Dawn Bracely – We'll send flowers to the church. We usually spend around \$200. Wydysch motions to spend up to \$225. Seconded by March. Approved.

Trey Wydysch as Secretary-Treasurer – Wydysch would be completing the balance of Mike McAndrew's elected term, so president (Harris) can motion to appoint. Harris motions to appoint Wydysch as Secretary-Treasurer. Seconded by Tan. Motion passes. Appointment will be brought up at a membership meeting on February 12.

Other Business

Harrington: There is some trouble in sports on holiday pay. Holiday pay rules need to be clarified with management.

Wydysch: Suggests looking into assistance for reporters covering Los Angeles fighters or assistance to News Guild members who have suffered losses in the fire. Tan motions to send \$250 for people affected by fire. Seconded by Bridenbaker. Motion passes.

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes: Feb. 10, 2025

Attendance: Besecker, Bridenbaker, Brophy, Harrington, Harris, Kremblas, Leiser, Robinson, Tan, Watson, Wiorkowski, Wydysch

Absent: Lenzi, March, Tsujimoto

Call to order at 5:06 p.m. by Harris

Approval of previous minutes: Tan motions to approve with previously discussed changes, Besecker seconds. Approved.

President's report – Harris

Main insurance issues have been worked out, all insurance cards have been mailed. We are unsure whether a dental issue for Sandra Tan has been cleared up. Harris will reach out to Mark Hall.

Issues with Lee Enterprises: Despite hiring freeze, the News is still attempting to find a way to hire a GA reporter. In the wake of the cyberattack, there are some concerns in Guild membership that Lee will stumble into making permanent the temporary changes to the paper.

Mobilization report – Besecker

There will be a meeting with the Martin Group on Feb. 18, a Guild happy hour Feb. 20, a bowling event March 15.

The latest Frontier Reporter is published.

We are considering buying a retractable sign for community events. We will get estimates and share estimates at the next meeting.

We are considering a member survey for speaking events.

Grievance report – Watson

Nothing new to report.

Old Business

AFSCME Council 66 – We have a draft agreement. They are sharing that and the dues breakdown with their members. If members are good with that, they'll recommend to members that they move forward and vote on it. We will have nothing official until March or later.

Tan: Please send the agreement to the executive committee before the next meeting if it is done.

Inclement weather policy and tech issues: If there is an actual weather event in Western New York, it will be dealt with here. If weather in Cleveland prevents newspapers from

getting here, Guild members will come in to work and will find something to do.

If there is a weather event here, members in Inside Circulation can use vacation or floating holidays or a personal day. DMs can take a sick day.

These modifications will be added to the contract as an MOA. For now, it is a verbal agreement.

A weather emergency here must be declared by a competent authority (the mayor, county executive, governor, etc.)

This is a work in progress, still, but we have a basis for how it will play out in the future. The old policy will kick in if there is a weather emergency here.

New Business

Guild office space – The lease expires on our office space March 31. The landlord has offered an extension on the current lease.

Leiser: I think it is more cost effective to move everything to a storage unit. It has been at least 6 years since we have had a meeting at the office space. Getting just a one-year lease instead of an extension will increase the rent. We could save more than \$3,000 a year if we leave our office space and rent a storage unit.

Wiorkowski motions to leave our current office space. Wydysch seconds. Approves.

Leiser will get quotes on storage spaces.

Lee's Q1 earnings

Lee announced an operating loss of \$3.3M. Factoring in the loan from Warren Buffett, the loss is closer to \$16M.

Investor David Hoffman tells St. Louis Magazine he wants answers and that management needs to be more realistic. The company should be looking at cutting \$40M in costs mostly on the print side and says there are efficiencies to be gained in tech and AI.

There are no immediate newsroom cuts planned.

This is the worst for Lee in recent memory Lee has ever had, and big losses in print revenue are not being made up by digital revenue.

Members discuss issuing a statement on social media, emphasizing that these problems are Lee problems. Readers don't realize that the decisions being made that negatively affect their experience of The Buffalo News are being made by Lee Enterprises, not The Buffalo News.

Other Business

We will be sending our final payment to the Pittsburgh striker.

Wydysch motions to reschedule the general membership meeting to March 19 at 12:30 p.m. Besecker seconds. Motion approved.

Meeting adjourned at 6:07 p.m

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes for March 10, 2025

Attendance: Besecker, Bridenbaker, Brophy, Harrington, Harris, March, Leiser, Lenzi, Robinson, Watson, Wiorkowski, Wydysch

Absent: Kremblas, Tan, Tsujimoto

Call to order at 5:05 p.m.

Approval of previous meeting's minutes: Harris motions to approve with previously discussed changes. Wiorkowski seconds. Approved.

President's report - Harris

Lee's response to the cyberattack has been frustrating, but accounts payable is back up and running.

We will have a general membership meeting March 19 from 12:30 p.m.-1:30 p.m.

Mobilization report - Besecker

There is a bowling event planned for March 15.

We will be participating in the Waterkeeper cleanup on April 26. There are 50 open spots; 40 are still available.

We have signed on to the Society of Professional Journalists letter to White House protesting the banning of the Associated Press from the press room.

Recapping the meeting with the Martin Group: We brainstormed strategies for a community engagement campaign. Matt Davison has followed up with Sandy. Possible ideas discussed were local journalism events, community forums and scholarships. We should view outreach as a campaign to build over 2.5 years to the next round of bargaining.

Harris: We will be discussing Matt's recommendations at the next mobilization committee meeting.

Grievance report - Watson

Reimbursement issues: Possible plans to file a grievance over payment of expense accounts were nullified since Lee has started to reimburse members. However, there is still the issue of unfulfilled interest payments due to members. The grievance committee will find a way for members to submit for those payments.

Lee/The News has not forwarded dues payments to the union since January.

Harrington: On the subject of expense payments, it is just January that has been paid so far?

Watson: Yes, but February is in process.

Bridenbaker: What if this happens again? Why do we have to pry information and action out of them?

Watson: We hope they have a better backup plan if this were to happen again.

Old business

Inclement weather policy: Leiser: District managers can use their sick time. We are working on a plan to address each issue as it comes. There will be an MOA.

What can we do to get Lee/The News to be better next time? We are open to suggestions from members.

Harris: There could be a site-specific emergency fund.

Wiorkowski: Two years ago, someone had \$15,000 to give out to division managers. Can this be done again?

Bridenbaker: How can we get Lee/The News to communicate inclement weather plans/policies better than they do? We shouldn't have to bug them for this information.

Leiser: The \$15K came from accounts payable. It can't be done again because there is no accounts payable system, but Harris' suggestion would be a good idea. Regarding communication, we can't force them to communicate better than they do.

AFSCME Council 66 - They are still explaining everything to their members, and we are waiting to hear back from them. When they're set, we can review.

Guild office move - Leiser: We are going with Corrigan moving. They could guarantee a move by March 31. We haven't settled on a storage place yet, but it will probably cost \$130-140 a month for the storage and \$2000 for a move. We will still save money and the savings will grow in the coming years. Paying for a year in full is our best bet.

Harris: Is there any need to go to the office and go through things at this point?

Leiser: Everything is boxed up and ready to go.

Accounts payable and cybersecurity - Lee and Berkshire Hathaway agreed to delay the March interest payment on the loan. The outage affected Guild dues. We took some money from the defense fund in the meantime.

Wydysh: Has anyone at Lee been more forthcoming with you?

Harris: Not really. An Omaha guild member visited the hackers' site, and it appears as though an IT contact list was posted there. Employee names mentioned were not from Buffalo. We'll sit down to figure out a solution with management.

There will be a note to come to notify membership of the general meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.