The Frontier Reporter

Winter Edition 2025-26

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"I famously turned down a last-minute assignment to go report on the Woodstock festival in August 1969 because our group had a gig that weekend." – Dale Anderson

"Gusto has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember." – Toni Ruberto

"Working at The Buffalo News was truly a dream come true for me." – Natalie Brophy

Guild salutes members who departed due to cuts

By William Perkins – The Guild said goodbye last fall to half a dozen Editorial members who departed due to the latest cuts implemented at The Buffalo News by Lee Enterprises.

Two of the members took buyouts, while one had a position eliminated. Others were laid off for the first time in newsroom history, including one recent hire.

Longtime copy editor Mike Pesarchick, working part-time, and Caitlyn Stair, a Hamburg Sun reporter, left shortly after the cuts were announced. Reporters Dale Anderson, Natalie Brophy, Jamal Harris, and Gusto Editor Toni Ruberto departed later in the fall. In addition, Sharon Gleason, a non-Guild editor, took a buyout.

In this issue, Anderson, Ruberto and Brophy offer reflections on their time at The News.

Dale Anderson, Natalie Brophy and Toni Ruberto.

Dale Anderson recounts the start of a 57-year career

Editor's Note: Dale Anderson was the longest active member of the Buffalo Newspaper Guild when he left last fall after holding numerous features and straight news reporting, column (Olaf Fub) and editing positions at The News. Here he recounts how it all began.

By Dale Anderson – At last, big city reporter, I thought to myself as I pushed through the swinging doors of the Buffalo Evening News city room on the second floor at 214-218 Main St. for my first day on the job on Sept. 23, 1968.

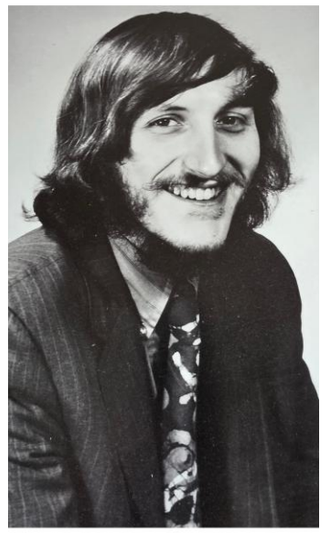
After nearly four years covering small town affairs in Dunkirk and Fredonia, I was craving some major metropolitan adventures, like Front Page Farrell and those other hard-nosed newshounds on the radio as I was growing up. Plus I was getting a raise: $140 a week.

So where did they send me? Over to the Western New York desk in the corner. For my first assignment, jovial WNY editor Bob MacClellan told me to call the town I just left and ask the police if anything happened there overnight.

Along with a flock of full- and part-time correspondents in the outlying counties, the WNY desk had two reporters in the office. The other was Bob Buyer, an award-winning agricultural writer who seemed to have close personal relationships with every farmer from Olcott to Olean. Part of my job was to pick up spot news. In my assignment envelope each morning were clippings from the rival Courier-Express, which needed to be fact-checked and rewritten.

The rest of it was feature stories. On Oct. 16, 1968, my byline showed up deep in the local section, reporting on how Batavia, Dunkirk, Lockport and Niagara Falls all were putting up new apartment buildings for the elderly. Five days later I made the "trick page" (city section front) with a story about the runaway growth of the area's four community colleges. My name also appeared on Nov. 19, this time in eight-point type. The News in those days listed all the convictions in Buffalo's Traffic Court and I'd gotten a $15 speeding ticket.

My lowly status came with compensations, though. Most of the cityside reporters had to share an island of desks, while I had one of my own with a window overlooking the corner of Main and Seneca streets (from which I watched the tallest office tower in town get built on our doorstep). I also had my own phone. When other reporters got a call, the newsroom switchboard operators would tell them to pick it up in one of the half-dozen phone booths along the wall opposite the city desk.



Dale Anderson, circa 1970-71.

It wasn't until February 1969 that my first music feature appeared – "Eric Andersen Takes Time Out for a Quiet Chat" – an interview at the singer-songwriter's parents' home in Snyder prior to a Kleinhans Music Hall concert. It stood beside Karen Brady's "On This Side of 30" column on a page of youth-oriented articles.

I was in a band myself at the time, playing bars on weekends and figuring that this newspaper job was just a temporary stop on the road to becoming a rock star. I famously turned down a last-minute assignment to go report on the Woodstock festival in August 1969 because our group had a gig that weekend. Features critic Jeff Simon went instead. As I said back then, I didn't want to cover Woodstock, I wanted to play it.

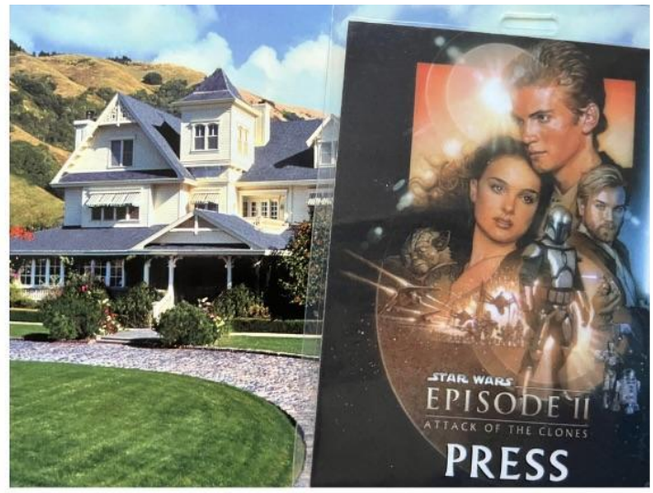
Come 1970, The News decided to juice up its appeal to the Woodstock generation with stories about something they all cared about – music. And who was in the middle of that scene? So in April, the Saturday TV Topics magazine started including a special section, Weekend Pause, in its back pages, and I began writing the feature stories for it about local musicians. They were a hit. By summer, I knew where my career was heading. I quit the band.

Toni Ruberto on the importance and ingenuity of Gusto

By Toni Ruberto – The Gusto section has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. That's true even today, more than a year after it published its last weekly edition and a few months since the Gusto Editor position I held was eliminated at The Buffalo News.

That's because my journey with Gusto started decades before I first walked into the Buffalo News.

As a kid, I scoured the weekly Gusto section from cover to cover, circling items and marking special events with stars. I cut out movie ads to put on my bulletin board and saved articles for my "library." I looked for new movies and searched the super-size calendar. It didn't matter that I wasn't old enough to attend most of the events because Gusto made me feel like I was part of the action. I wasn't alone.



Left: Some of the pandemic Gusto covers. Right: A press pass for "Attack of the Clones" along with a postcard.

Mention Gusto in Buffalo and you'll be told how people "grew up" with the section and read every page just like I did. You'll hear the same today, but now the stories are tinged with sadness since Gusto's last weekly edition was published on Jan. 9, 2025.

I feel double the loss. Not only was I a lifelong reader and fan, but I was lucky to be a part of Gusto as a writer and editor. It took a while, but I got there.

Film and music were always important to me. While attending SUNY Fredonia for music performance (string bass), I spent so much time in the college newspaper office that I transferred to SUNY Buffalo State where I earned a journalism degree.

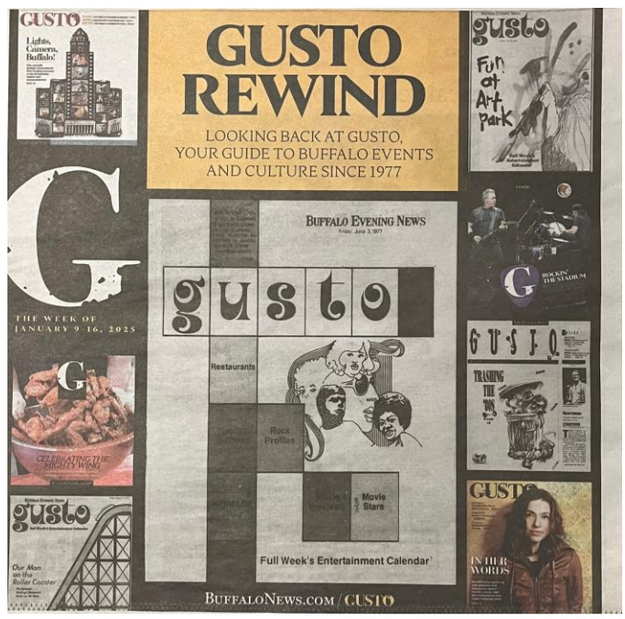
I always hoped to work for my hometown paper, but it seemed like a pipe dream. The News hired from prestigious journalism schools like St. Bonaventure and Syracuse University, not Buff State. And Buffalo natives were told they wouldn't be considered unless they left and worked for several years at other papers.

But I persisted and sent letters to The News despite my lack of experience. My favorite response was the mocking reply from an editor telling me they had a waiting list of candidates who were far better than I was.

With the help of former pop music critic Tony Violanti, who assigned me freelance stories, and the support of Feature Department Assistant Managing Editor Sue Lotempio and the Buffalo Newspaper Guild, I was hired in 2001 as a copy editor for the society/women's pages.

I worked with respected editors Erna P. Eaton and Lisa Muelhbauer who ran a well-oiled machine of society news, engagements, weddings and golden anniversaries. That may sound quaint today, but it was one of the most important sections and services of the paper. Readers bought extra copies of Sunday's paper to save the announcements, which needed to be perfect.

The skills I learned from Erna and Lisa – especially of treating readers with respect – took me through



The last cover of Gusto.

other jobs in the general Features Department including the Travel pages, TV Topics and Sunday Arts. Meanwhile, I volunteered to do anything with Gusto. While enthusiasm and speed were two of my best qualities, they could also get me in trouble, like the first time I proofed the Gusto calendar and edited in a typo. I was called out for it and warned that it couldn't happen again. Lesson learned.

By 2010, I became "Acting Gusto Editor" and worked hard enough to have "acting" removed. Special thanks to the editors and award-winning designers who worked on Gusto through the years, including Joe Roland, Rick Stanley, Rich Donaldson, Cindy Szymanski Dickey, Sharon Gleason, Barb Sullivan, Mike Pesarchick, Carol Fiend, Carol Russo, Vince Chiaramonte, Terry Lew, Leah Samol and Christina Wilemski.

Though editing is my first love, the writing opportunities that came with Gusto were amazing. My three favorites: interviewing Oscar-winner Christian Bale for "Reign of Fire" (because if you can interview Christian Bale, do it for his dragon movie); speaking with Johnny Mathis, who was loved dearly by my parents; and the unbelievable opportunity to attend a press junket at George Lucas' Skywalker Ranch in California for "Star

Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones." I was the one with Samuel L. Jackson discussing the meaning of his lightsaber color and our mutual affection for old monster movies.

My proudest accomplishment is a long-running one that lasted about 18 months. When Covid shut down the world in 2020, it would have made sense for a "Things to Do" publication like Gusto to stop publishing. Instead, Gusto pivoted to become a reader resource in a new way by publishing long lists of cancellations, postponements and how to get refunds. We compiled lists of restaurants that were serving takeout, movie theaters selling drive-up popcorn and bars with specialty bottled cocktails to-go.

That was thanks to the ingenuity of the Gusto staff, plus sports clerks who compiled listings and freelancers who used their interests to write about social-distancing activities like bird watching, horse riding and virtual events. Gusto became smaller, but it never missed a week and that was a shining accomplishment by the staff even if it was never acknowledged by management.

I can still see myself as a kid cutting out Gusto articles and feel the excitement of working for Gusto. It will always be a part of me – and of Buffalo.

Natalie Brophy reflects on a dream fulfilled

By Natalie Brophy – Working at The Buffalo News was truly a dream come true for me.

As someone who grew up in Western New York and always loved writing, learning and asking questions, becoming a journalist felt like the perfect career path. Getting the chance to do that work at my hometown newspaper was something I never took for granted. While I wish I could have spent more time there, I'm incredibly grateful for the nearly four years I did have at The News and for all the wonderful coworkers, sources and community members I met along the way.

During my time at The Buffalo News, I covered hundreds of stories across Buffalo's growing technology and startup industry and Western New York's suburbs. So many fun stories and experiences flash through my mind as I reflect back on my career at The News: riding on a Dyngus Day float with the founders of a 43North-winning company during their first few months in Buffalo, watching a total solar eclipse on the brink of Niagara Falls, spending the day at the Ten Lives Club after the cat rescue received more than $400,000 of donations from Bills Mafia and football fans and cat lovers across the world, and eating a lot of election night pizza from Carbone's. But most importantly, I'll always be grateful I had the opportunity to share stories I will always be proud of with my community – stories that made an impact and gave people who are too often overlooked a platform to share their experiences.

I am lucky to have worked alongside so many talented journalists at The Buffalo News. They care deeply about our community and about the work they do every day. Local journalism is incredibly important, and our communities are stronger when we support the reporters and newsrooms working to keep people informed.

I'm also grateful for the role the Buffalo Newspaper Guild plays in protecting journalists and advocating for the people who do this work every day. Having a strong union matters, and I appreciated the opportunity to get involved and stand alongside colleagues working to make our newsroom better. I will always be a proud Buffalo Newspaper Guild supporter!

Everything I learned during my time at The News has helped prepare me for my new role as press secretary for State Sen. April Baskin, where I'm proud to continue serving Western New York in a different way.

Finally, thank you to the leadership of the Buffalo Newspaper Guild, especially Kim Leiser and Jon Harris, for helping make my transition out of the newsroom as smooth as possible. Their support meant a great deal during a big career change.

Tax credit program for newsroom jobs finally launches in NY

By Jon Harris – A journalism jobs program the Buffalo Newspaper Guild advocated for nearly two years ago has finally come to fruition, and it could lead to up to $320,000 in tax credits annually for The Buffalo News.

Applications opened Feb. 24 for the Empire State Newspaper and Broadcast Media Jobs Program, which will offer a total of up to $30 million annually in tax credits to eligible newspaper and broadcast media businesses operating in New York State. The application process closes April 24.

President and Publisher Sean Jacobsen will be working on an application for The Buffalo News. Further, Lee Enterprises Chief Legal Officer Astrid Garcia said the company's tax director is reviewing program guidelines. In addition to The Buffalo News, Lee owns The Citizen in Auburn and The Post-Star in Glens Falls.

Tom Wiley, former publisher at The Buffalo News, played a big role in crafting language for the program in 2024. The Guild chipped in by making calls to state legislators to secure support for the program, which was approved in 2024.

To qualify, businesses must be independently owned. However – and this is why a chain newspaper like The Buffalo News is eligible – a print media business can qualify by demonstrating a reduction in circulation or full-time-equivalent employees of at least 20% over the previous five years.

The program offers a tax credit through two components: an existing jobs component (up to $26 million available statewide per year), and a new job creation component (up to $4 million available per year).

In the existing jobs component, the tax credit equals 50% of an eligible employee's annual wages. Wages are capped at $50,000 per employee, meaning the maximum credit is $25,000 per employee.

Each eligible business can get up to $300,000 annually through the existing jobs component.

In the new job creation component, the tax credit is $5,000 per net new full-time job created, meaning an increase of at least one full-time position over the previous year. In this bucket, each eligible business can receive up to $20,000 in tax credits annually.

Of the total $30 million available annually, 50% is earmarked for businesses with at least 100 New York-based employees and the other 50% is set aside for those with fewer than 100 New York-based workers.

Based on our latest figures, The Buffalo News still has more than 100 total employees – union and nonunion – in New York.

In theory, The Buffalo News could receive the full $320,000 in tax credits this year if it proves it retained 12 employees ($25,000 times 12 equals $300,000) and it created four new jobs ($5,000 times 4 equals $20,000).

The program runs through Dec. 31, 2027, but the Guild is hopeful it could be continued beyond that if it proves effective.

We will keep members posted as we learn more.

Lee finally taps new publisher for The Buffalo News

The Buffalo News named Sean Jacobsen as publisher on Feb. 3. Jacobsen previously served as chief revenue officer for Hearst's media properties in San Francisco.

Jacobsen will primarily oversee advertising and marketing operations at The News.

"My job, as president and publisher, is really to make sure that we're setting that strategy from a news perspective and that we're also hitting the revenue goals so that we can continue to fund news and we continue to see it grow," Jacobsen said in a News story upon his hiring.

The News had been without a publisher for nine months after Tom Wiley departed.

Hoffmann leads investment deal in Lee Enterprises

By William Perkins – Billionaire David Hoffmann took a controlling interest in Lee Enterprises as part of a $50 million investment deal.

The deal, which was announced in late December and finalized in early February, saw Hoffmann invest $35 million and other investors contribute $15 million. Hoffmann also became chairman of Lee's board of directors.

In conjunction with the deal, Lee's lender, Berkshire Hathaway, reduced its interest rate from 9% to 5% for five years. Lee says that it has roughly $455.5 million in debt.

Lee CEO Kevin Mowbray retired upon news of the deal. Nathan Bekke, who had been chief operating officer, was named interim CEO.

Through his company, Hoffmann has several holdings. In December, his company announced a deal to purchase the Pittsburgh Penguins. And in February, Hoffmann said he was interested in buying both the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and the St. Louis Cardinals.

The Lonnie Hudkins Memorial Singers perform "You're a Mean One, Nasty Lee" at the Guild's holiday party.

Major Guild happenings since the summer/fall edition

- **October 2025** – The Guild hosts a public forum at Burchfield Penney Art Center called "The Future of Local Journalism: A Community Discussion." The forum is moderated by the Guild's Elizabeth Licata, and panelists included Sandy Tan; Geoff Kelly, of Investigative Post; Charles Gilbert, of BTPM NPR's "What's Next"; and Dave Greber, anchor at WIVB-TV. Lee Enterprises corrects a 401(k) accounting error after being notified by the Guild. The error affected 34 Guild members, most of whom were owed money. Lee Enterprises announced that it was moving to terminate its employee pension plan. The Guild agreed to the termination of the plan in its last contract negotiations, and the pension had been frozen since the 2021 contract that secured 401(k) contributions for members.

- **November 2025** – Four Guild members depart due to cuts at The News. Two took buyouts, one was laid off and one had a position eliminated. Full-time newsroom layoffs reflect a first in Guild history.

- **December 2025** – The Guild hosts its annual holiday party at Classics V in Amherst, one year after an unforgettable party held during a snowstorm in the Southtowns. Also in December, Guild officers are elected for 2026. Jon Harris is re-elected to a three-year term as president. Trey Wydysh is elected vice president of contract administration. Sandy Tan is elected vice president for mobilization and communication. Francesca Bond is elected secretary/treasurer. Eric Bridenbaker, Jason Kremblas and Rick Wiorkowski are re-elected DM stewards. Mike Harrington is elected sports/photo steward. Steve Watson, Dave Robinson and Aaron Besecker are elected to serve on the Executive Committee, and Rachel Lenzi is elected as an alternate.

- **February 2026** – Sean Jacobsen is named the new publisher of The Buffalo News. Guild Executive Committee approves sending $500 DoorDash gift card to cover the cost of a meal for the newsroom of the Minnesota Star Tribune, in recognition and support for their tireless work reporting on the surge of immigration enforcement agents in Minneapolis and the shooting of two U.S. citizens.

Comings & Goings from The Buffalo News/Hamburg Sun

Comings: None

Goings:
Dale Anderson, Editorial
Natalie Brophy, Editorial
Jamal Harris, Editorial
Roman Henry, District Manager
Tim O'Shei, Editorial
Shawntriece Robinson, District Manager
Toni Ruberto, Editorial

Upcoming meetings

Executive Committee meetings are currently scheduled for the remainder of 2026 as follows: March 9; April 13; May 11; June 8; July 13; Aug. 10; Sept. 14; Oct. 12; Nov. 9; Dec. 14.

The next general membership meetings are currently scheduled for May 13, Aug. 12 and Nov. 18. For the most up-to-date meeting schedule, visit: buffaloguild.org

Meeting minutes

These approved meeting minutes in the Frontier Reporter are slightly edited and 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 minutes: Sept. 9, 2025

Attendance: Aaron Besecker, Natalie Brophy, Mike Harrington, Jon Harris, Jason Kremblas, Kim Leiser, Rachel Lenzi, Dave Robinson, Sandy Tan, Steve Watson, Rick Wiorkowski, Trey Wydysh

Absent: Eric Bridenbaker, Ben Tsujimoto, Libby March (excused)

Call to order at 5:06 p.m.

Lenzi motions to approve minutes. Wiorkowski seconds. Approved.

President's report – Harris

There were 15-17 people at the Labor Day Parade.

The News has hired a sports reporter and has made an offer to a candidate for the GA reporter position.

Leiser and Harris met with management on AI, the automated weather alerts and the AI-generated newsletters.

Harris says Lee is allowed to publish the weather alerts, but a verified journalist has to verify the other AI content.

Mobilization report – Besecker

There is a picnic on 9/20. Currently there are five members, plus guests signed up.

There will be a panel event at the Burchfield Penney Art Center in October. Event info and invites will be coming out soon.

Our involvement in the Labor Day Parade was well received on social media.

Tan is working on the summer/fall edition of the Frontier Reporter.

Grievance Report – Watson

Leiser is working on a grievance over 401(k) contributions from the company. A member realized that Lee has stopped contributing to the 401(k)s of members who achieved 25 years of seniority and new hires, and also started progressing other employees through the seniority steps. The company currently owes approximately $45,000 to members. Tammy Turnbull and Astrid Garcia want to rectify the issue, but Leiser is still filing a grievance to send a message to the rest of Lee that this cannot happen.

Empower will be provided the adjustments that are necessary, and then they will calculate the corrections and inform Lee what payment is necessary to Empower. It is confirmed that people will be receiving a minimum of lost earnings, and the goal is to have it done before the next payment.

A message will be sent to members laying out how they can check their contributions.

USB drive issues

Guild discusses concerns raised by Tan about ongoing encryption requirements for USB drives for people on the exempt list. Leiser says additional information raises concerns that will be discussed with management.

Brophy reports that the issue with her not having access to Outlook and Teams on her phone has been fixed.

Old Business

Adam Zyglis security

The cost for the security upgrades was $5,200 and the Guild paid $5,000. We asked Lee to pitch in on the monthly subscription to security services. They declined, but covered the remaining $200. The News had provided $20,000 for private security previously.

Harris says management did not want to issue a public statement and "reignite the fire," and didn't want a staff message to get leaked. Tan expresses disappointment that resolution got no response.

Guild picnic

Signups ongoing for the Guild picnic. Members discuss logistics, concern about low turnout, spreading the word and rethinking strategy for future events.

Sector conference

Leiser will be doing contract work for the Pacific Northwest guild.

Harrington update on Canada

This is still dragging on. They might go to a list access form to get people access in Canada. Sports will have some big Canada road trips coming up.

Corporate can't seem to understand that we need access in Canada, so the grievance is still open.

Harris suggests bringing issue up at AI meeting with management.

District Manager updates

Guild discusses the closing of the Southtowns office. It is not clear what changes will take place. The Guild is trying to figure out a way for someone to float around the Southtowns.

Leiser said that if DMs check in at Sonwil, then drive to the Southtowns, they will get mileage for that.

Wiorkowski states all papers will come to Sonwil. The North office becomes a glorified relay.

Meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Special Executive Committee meeting minutes: Sept. 22, 2025

Attendance: Jon Harris, Kim Leiser, Aaron Besecker, Sandra Tan, Mike Harrington, Rachel Lenzi, Aaron Besecker, Rick Wiorkowski, Eric Bridenbaker, Natalie Brophy, Dave Robinson, Jason Kremblas, Steve Watson

Absent: Trey Wydysh (excused), Libby March

Call to order 5:05 p.m.

Besecker motions to approve $450 to pay Burchfield Penney for our panel event. That covers rent of $350 plus $100 for staying past 8:30 p.m. Tan seconds. Approved.

Harris on cost reductions

Harris and Leiser met with management. There will be a staff meeting on Wednesday to cover The News' digital goals and what needs to change. Please make every attempt to attend and encourage colleagues to do the same.

Management is looking for four to five volunteers to resign with severance. Managers count, too.

Management plans to start meeting with assigning editors next week to talk about what changes are coming. After that, they will have one-on-one meetings with reporters. Employees have

until Nov. 1 (45 days) to volunteer for the buyout process. After Nov. 1, they have 45 days to consider actually taking a buyout. It is possible those who take a buyout won't be leaving until the end of December.

Guild discusses whether this affects the new hires (who will be signed up for the Guild) because they are in their probationary period.

Those who take the buyout will have a 50/50 shot at being eligible for unemployment..

Management is not looking at where to make cuts in regard to layoffs. They are only looking at buyouts at the moment.

Seniority does not apply to the buyout, and layoffs, if applicable, will occur from the bottom up. Buyouts are not available for DMs. Management is just looking to cut from Editorial.

Executive Committee discusses holding a general membership meeting after the one-on-one meetings to answer questions about buyouts, layoffs, severance, unemployment, etc.

Executive Committee discussed the non-sustainability of cuts every year and that The Buffalo News needs new ownership if it is going to survive.

Meeting adjourned.

Executive Committee Meeting minutes: Oct. 13, 2025

Attendance: Aaron Besecker, Eric Bridenbaker, Natalie Brophy, Jon Harris, Jason Kremblas, Kim Leiser, Sandy Tan, Steve Watson, Rick Wiorkowski, Trey Wydysh, Ben Tsujimoto.

Absent: Mike Harrington, Rachel Lenzi (excused), Dave Robinson (excused), Libby March.

Call to order at 5:33 p.m.

Approval of Sept. 9, Sept. 22, meeting minutes tabled

Mobilization report – Besecker

The event at the Burchfield Penney went well. Video will be ready soon.

Besecker is combing through testimonials and will put them in a spreadsheet for the executive committee.

Tan will have the summer/fall issue of the Frontier Reporter finished soon.

Grievance Report – Watson

After meeting with management, Leiser reports that Lee owes members $31,000 so far. Empower will figure out what Lee needs to make payments to news employees. What is owed to past Guild members is not factored in, yet.

Budget Approval

Finance committee recommended and submitted for approval the proposed 2026 budget.

Discussed creating a separate budget line for NOW Group and starting with $5,000.

Besecker motions to approve budget. Harris seconds. Approved.

Newsroom Cost Cutting

Guild is still seeking 3-4 volunteers for a buyout. One-on-one meetings with management are still happening. Group meetings will happen soon. Two or three members have expressed interest, so far.

Committee discussed issues surrounding management's cost cutting measures, including whether skips can be used on recent new hires, and whether new hires are entitled to severance. Committee believes it's necessary to take a look at the contract in order to make a clear stance.

Committee discusses having a general membership meeting in the next week to present information to members as soon as possible and answer questions about severance, part-time work etc.

Tan motions to set aside $1,500 for 6 hours of meeting availability with Level Financial for members to learn financial implication of taking a buyout. Wydysh seconds. Approved.

Elimination of printing on Monday

Committee discussed whether the elimination of a printed paper on Mondays will affect the DMs. Management has initially said they could change the schedule with two weeks notice and make everyone take Mondays off, but they softened that stance a bit.

Committee also discussed issues of management doing DM work and possible jurisdiction violations. Open communication between management/DMs was stressed.

Meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

General Membership Meeting minutes: Oct. 21, 2025

Call to order at 12:05 p.m.

Discussion on cost cutting measures announced by management, led by Harris

The Guild is still looking for volunteers for a buyout, and it is fair to say we are looking at layoffs at this time. The Executive Committee has allocated $1,500 for one-on-one meetings with Level Financial. The funds cover the first half of meetings. Part-time job sharing is possible.

401(k) issues

Kim Leiser is working with Lee to correct the 401(k) contributions. Some people were underpaid, and some people were overpaid.

Questions from members about cost-cutting measures

Members discussed whether recent retirements could affect buyouts (no); whether costs in other departments could affect the newsroom cuts (no); the existence of a layoff list (no); when the buyouts would take place; how management could use skips; whether the cost cutting would lead to delays in health care enrollment (not expected); whether severances can be negotiable; part-time/job shares; bumping rights; travel cuts; changes to beats; unemployment eligibility; severance; and health insurance.

NOW Group

Tan announced that the NOW Group has been formed. Laid out a list of subcommittees and what the group needs help with.

Meeting adjourned at 1 p.m.

Executive Committee Meeting minutes: Nov. 10, 2025

Attendance: Aaron Besecker, Eric Bridenbaker, Mike Harrington, Jon Harris, Kim Leiser, Sandy Tan, Steve Watson, Rick Wiorkowski, Trey Wydysh, Ben Tsujimoto

Absent: Jason Kremblas, Rachel Lenzi (excused), Dave Robinson (excused), Libby March

Call to order at 5:07 p.m.

Approval of meeting minutes

Tan motions to approve executive committee meeting minutes for Sept. 9. Wiorkowski seconds. Approved.

Tan motions to approve special executive committee meeting minutes for Sept. 22. Harris seconds. Approved.

Tan motions to approve executive committee meeting minutes for Oct. 13. Wiorkowski seconds. Approved.

Harris motions to approve general membership meeting minutes for Oct. 21 with approved change. Tan seconds. Approved.

President's report – Harris

Open enrollment has started. The Guild has sent out a flyer notifying members of plan changes.

Hamburg Sun editor Chris Graham is now officially a member of the Guild.

The Guild will send out a flyer soliciting interest in officer positions. Nominations will take place at the executive committee meeting Dec. 8.

Committee had brief discussion about open enrollment process and whether the Hamburg Sun content can now be used on buffalonews.com, whether there will be an online page for the Sun and whether Sun photos can be used in print in The Buffalo News.

Mobilization report – Besecker

The video from the event at Burchfield Penney will be posted to our social media channels soon. We will share a link to the whole video and will also clip parts of the discussion for social media posts.

Tan asks if the Guild can post something about the court win for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette strikers.

Grievance report – Watson and Leiser

Everyone affected by the 401(k) contributions error has been notified and restitution is underway.

Members briefly discussed ongoing issue with managers doing DM work, and changing schedules on short notice. The Guild will be filing a grievance.

Members discussed a recent Lee Enterprises news release announcing the issuance of more shares of stock.

Members also discussed the recent cost-cutting measures that affected the newsroom, including the buyouts of two members, the elimination of the position of another member, and the layoff of another member.

Tan motions for executive committee to enter into executive session to discuss personnel changes. Motion approved and executive committee enters executive session at 5:30 p.m.

Executive committee exits executive session at 6:17 p.m.

Tan motions to seek a third-party legal opinion on how buyouts and job eliminations/cuts in the newsroom were undertaken by News management and that the Guild's concerns are relayed to News management.

Watson amends motion to just seek legal opinion. Wydysh seconds. Approved.

Holiday Party Update

Executive committee members discussed options for locations to hold the party in the Northtowns.

Canada Access Issue Update

Harrington reports that Lee will now authorize access to Microsoft Outlook and Teams to reporters while in Canada if they are given advance notice of when reporters will be in Canada.

The Canadian subscribers issue has also been resolved.

NOW Group Update

The work of the group continues and has been going very well.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Executive Committee Meeting minutes: Dec. 8, 2025

Attendance: Aaron Besecker, Eric Bridenbaker, Mike Harrington, Jon Harris, Jason Kremblas, Kim Leiser, Dave Robinson, Sandy Tan, Steve Watson, Rick Wiorkowski, Trey Wydysh.

Absent: Rachel Lenzi, Ben Tsujimoto (both excused)

Call to order 5:02 p.m.

Approval of minutes from Nov. 8 meeting: Tan motions to approve with approved changes (add a reason for executive session, add Bridenbaker to attendance). Harrington seconds. Approved.

President's report – Harris

We are still waiting on one member to sign their release paperwork after the recent round of staffing cuts.

Content produced by the Hamburg Sun Editor Chris Graham will start appearing on buffalonews.com.

Brief discussion among members about Lee's A.I. policy. Lee is moving forward with more A.I. initiatives, including a Chat GPT account. Leadership assumes there will be a discussion with management before implementation.

Lee will convene a special shareholder meeting on Dec. 19. It is expected that if a certain number of shares are sold, it will lower the interest rate Lee has to pay on its loan from Berkshire Hathaway.

Mobilization report – Besecker

Social posts have been sent about Guild members that left in October and about the Burchfield Penney event held earlier in the fall.

Grievance report – Watson

We will be filing a grievance over managers doing DM work, which is against the contract.

Discussion about a Buffalo Bandits story that ran as a lead story in print, written by a freelancer, and about a photo taken by a reporter that also appeared in print. Harrington and Leiser believe the Bandits issue should be grieved. Tan suggests giving sports editor Perryn Keys a heads up. Leiser will draft grievances.

Holiday party recap

Fifty-five members attended the Guild holiday party, which came in $3,700 under budget, and the Guild collected $670 in ticket fees from members.

Nominations/Elections

Nominations commenced for new officers to serve three-year terms from Jan. 2026 to Dec. 2028.

President – Besecker nominates Harris. Wydysh seconds. Harris elected by acclaim.

Vice President, Contract Administration – Watson nominates Wydysh. Tan seconds. Wydysh elected by acclaim.

Vice President, Mobilization – Wydysh nominates Tan. Tan elected by acclaim.

Secretary/Treasurer – Leiser nominates Bond. Tan seconds. Bond elected by acclaim.

DM Stewards – Leiser nominates Bridenbaker, Kremblas and Wiorkowski. Bridenbaker, Kremblas and Wiorkowski elected by acclaim.

Sports/photo Steward – Tan nominates Harrington. Leiser seconds. Harrington elected by acclaim.

Discussion about space for 3 EC members from newsroom. Tsujimoto has offered to step down.

Executive Committee newsroom nominations – Tan nominates Watson, Robinson and Besecker to serve on the Executive Committee, and nominates Lenzi to serve as

alternate. Harrington seconds. Watson, Robinson, Besecker and Lenzi elected by acclaim.

Discussion on getting more members from the DM ranks involved. They can have one more EC member, plus one alternate.

Discussion occurred for informational purposes on what bylaws state about Stewards outside of Editorial and how many Stewards we are allowed to have.

Proposed 2026 meeting dates

EC meetings proposed for the second Monday of each month: 1/12, 2/9, 3/9, 4/13, 5/11, 6/8, 7/13, 8/10, 9/14, 10/12, 11/9, 12/14.

Four general membership meeting dates proposed: 2/11, 5/13, 8/12, 11/18.

Harris motions to approve. Wydysh seconds. Approved

Informational discussion follows on the inclement weather policy is for DMs and what is considered inclement weather.

Discussion follows on NOW Group meeting and consideration of organizing and adding a new unit in the new year.

Meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Executive Committee Meeting minutes: Jan. 12, 2026

Attendance: Aaron Besecker, Francesca Bond, Jon Harris, Kim Leiser, Dave Robinson, Sandy Tan, Steve Watson, Rick Wiorkowski, Trey Wydysh

Absent: Trey Kremblas, Eric Bridenbaker

Excused: Rachel Lenzi, Mike Harrington

Call to order 5:04 p.m.

Approval of minutes from Dec. 8 meeting: Tan motions to approve with approved changes (adjust to two Bandits stories, one by a freelancer and one by a sports editor). Leiser seconds. Approved.

President's report – Harris

Last member affected by staffing cuts signed waiver and release paperwork.

Mobilization report – Besecker, Tan

Had holiday party

Sent out reminder email to DMs about their inclement weather options

Tan wonders if we should address Pittsburgh Post Gazette closure. Considering asking members to sign a petition to support Pittsburgh. Fundraising request was put out, Tan wonders if we should make a donation or wait until there's more clarity on where money will go. Leiser and Watson think it's premature to donate. If there's an opportunity to pledge support, we will, Tan said.

Grievance report – Leiser, Watson

Concern about freelancer's story and unsigned Perryn Keys story, Margaret said she discussed the problem with Keys and said that however we cover the Bandits, it has to be staff coverage. Margaret already aware of the issue and addressing it with Keys.

Other issue is a photo taken by a staff reporter and not a photographer. Didn't actually run in print. Reporter was apologetic about the situation and said she will make sure to put in photo assignments from now on.

Management doing guild protected work in DM ranks, grievance has been brought to management's attention. A meeting was held with district manager doing supervisor work. Leiser was told it should not happen again, but if it does, then we should file another grievance, Leiser said. This is not a sanctioned activity by the company.

Wiorkowski brought up question around DMs using sick time. Leiser said the company can't prevent you from calling in sick if you are under the 56 hours allowed by the state. However, if you don't have sick time or are on bonafides, then there may be issues. Leiser said we changed the policy to say that if there is no inclement weather here, then you have to go to work.

New business – Harris

Hoffmann investment in Lee – Dec. 30, Hoffmann leading $50 million investment in Lee Enterprises. Hoffmann will become lead shareholder. Berkshire Hathaway forgiving some interest payments. Harris said we don't know how they're going to spend the money or who the new CEO will be. Nathan Bekke is interim CEO.

Harris spoke to Jim Heaney for his column about what Hoffmann investment will mean for Buffalo.

Robinson said Lee lost $60 million over the last two years and was on a straight path to bankruptcy. This gives leeway and was on better terms than Hoffmann's initial offer. What remains to be seen is what he's going to do. He's made comments in the past that he likes small papers more than big papers. Having $50 million in the bank buys the company a little more time. Leiser and Wiorkowski said our circulation numbers put us in a smaller paper category at this point.

Tan wonders if we should send something out about our members regarding Hoffmann. Leiser said we don't know anything more than Robinson's article stated about the situation. Watson suggested sending email once the deal closes, after shareholder vote. "What you should know and what to watch for" about the ownership change.

Tan mentioned there's no more Frontier reporter/editor. Wants to know if anyone is interested in taking over the newsletter, which requires a couple of new stories each quarter. To change $800 stipend, would need to do that in executive committee.

Wiorkowski wonders if pension termination would be affected by new deal.

Besecker brought up Lee-wide call about AI being a tool that journalists can use. There was a significant amount of backlash from people in chat and during the call. The meeting leader said we need to be ethical and there are acceptable uses of AI.

Meeting adjourned at 5:47 p.m.