

Listen Up!

CHICAGO NEWSPAPER GUILD ● LOCAL 34071 ● TNG/CWA



November 2010

Gary-Chicago merger near

by Ralph Zahorik,
Chair, General Press Unit

A merger of the Chicago and Gary Newspaper Guild locals is expected to be formalized this month.

All the details haven't been worked out but officers of both locals said they expect the merger to take place. The proposal has to be approved by Gary Guild members and at a membership meeting of the Chicago Guild.

Combining the two locals makes sense because the Gary Guild's members work for the Post-Tribune based in Merrillville, Ind., which is owned by the Chicago Sun-Times Media Group which also owns four Illinois newspapers represented by the Chicago Guild, said Scott Bort, president of the Gary local.

"There's strength in numbers," Bort said. "Our bargaining power will be better."

"We have a common employer, the Sun-Times group, so it gives us a far-reaching group," said Tom Thibeault, executive director of the Chicago Newspaper Guild. "We need to bring them into the fold to make us stronger."

The Chicago Guild currently represents workers at the Sun-Times-owned Chicago Sun-Times, the Herald-News in Joliet, the Lake County News-Sun in Waukegan and the Pioneer Press newspaper chain based in Glenview. "We'd like (Sun-Times-owned) Aurora, Elgin,

the Southtown and Naperville, too," Thibeault said. At one time, the Chicago Guild represented newsroom employees at The Times in Hammond, Ind., and at the Rockford Register-Star.

Currently, Chicago Guild members pay slightly higher dues (1.8 percent of wages) than Gary members (1.5 percent). Under the merger proposal, Gary members would continue paying at their present rate during an affiliation period – three to four years – Thibeault said. "Then an adjustment would be discussed," he said.

In addition to 25 new members, the Gary Guild's treasury would be merged with the Chicago Guild. "They're bringing in a substantial amount of money to the

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local," Thibeault said. The Chicago Guild currently has about 450 members.

The Gary local also is expected to bring a tradition of activism to the Chicago local. "They've always been a strong union," Thibeault said.

"We don't like to be pushed around and we'd like to bring that attitude to the Chicago Guild," Bort said.

Bort, 27, joined the Post-Tribune three years ago. Before that, he worked as a visual journalist for the Elgin Courier-News. Bort was raised in the Chicago area and his family has a union background.

Gary Guild members, like newspaper workers around the country, have been hard hit by cuts in recent years. Bort said Gary workers went without a contract and raises for years under Hollinger, Conrad Black's media company.

continued inside



Gary Guild officers are from left: Secretary Stephanie Dowell, President Scott M. Bort and Vice-President Peggie Glennie outside the Post-Tribune offices in Merrillville, Ind. Photo by Jeffrey D. Nicholls.

Gary-Chicago merger, *continued*

Gary workers, like other Sun-Times group employees represented by the Guild and about a dozen other trade unions, agreed to pay cuts and contract concessions in October 2009 as a condition for the bankruptcy sale of the Sun-Times newspapers to a private investment group headed by Chicago banker James Tyree. Gary Guild members rejected the first contract proposed by the Tyree group by a vote of 17-1.

“We don’t like to be pushed around ...we’d like to bring that attitude to the Chicago Guild.” – Scott Bort

The new contracts approved in 2009 by all the Chicago and Gary units will, for the first time, all expire at the same time – in October 2012. Negotiations are scheduled to start this fall, Thibeault said.

The Gary local has no paid staff. Until

now, local officers have negotiated contracts and handled grievances mostly on their own with assistance from Bruce

Nelson, an international representative. If the merger goes through, the staff of the Chicago local would work with Gary.

“Bruce will still be there for them, and for us,” Thibeault said.

The Post-Tribune covers northwest Indiana and publishes seven days a week. The newspaper dropped Gary from its masthead in the late 1960s, after its sale to Knight-Ridder, and it became a morning newspaper in 1986. Conrad Black’s Hollinger bought the newspaper in 1998. The newspaper moved its main offices to Merrillville in 2000 and closed its Gary printing plant in 2007. •

Teamster Local 743 staff wins first Guild contract

The staff of Chicago-based Teamster Local 743 has its first contract with the local.

The agreement, ratified by the members of The Chicago Newspaper Guild’s newest unit last month, calls for hourly pay increases ranging from 10.3 percent to 11.7 percent for support staff, retroactive to Feb. 28, 2010, said Craig Rosenbaum, the Chicago Guild’s associate executive director/legal counsel. The top hourly pay rate will be \$26.65 an hour under the contract.

Business agents’ pay will go up to \$55,000 from \$52,500 after six months employment and to \$65,000 after a year, Rosenbaum said. There have been no staff raises for some time at the local. The Guild organized the unit in 2007 and was recognized as the bargaining representative for the Teamster employees in August 2009.

The contract stipulates no one can be discharged from the local without just cause. The “just cause” provision is important because of upheavals the local has experienced in recent years. When Local 743 members joined the Guild in December 2007 a new administration fired or forced out the entire staff, Rosenbaum noted.

In an agreement negotiated by the Guild after the dismissals, about a half-dozen fired staffers received money settlements from the local. All but one of the new staff has been hired since 2008.

Local 743 is one of the biggest Teamster locals in the country, representing 11,000 workers in factories, warehouses, mail order centers, hospitals and nursing homes in the Chicago region. The local is headquartered at 4620 S. Tripp Ave. in Chicago. •

What’s a Chicago union member to do?

A free-for-all began Sept. 9 when Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley announced unexpectedly he would not seek reelection on Feb. 8.

The Guild does not endorse candidates for public office by virtue of its constitution. But if a union wanted to endorse, it would be difficult to do in an orderly, democratic fashion on such short notice and so close to a bruising national election.

All over the city, candidates are scrambling to open offices and bank accounts, create websites, define their issues, raise dollars and hire consultants — while building an organization and gathering petitions.

Seventeen known candidates are in or mulling getting in the race, with probably a few more characters thinking of throwing their hats in the ring.

Some candidates will be unable to collect the required 12,500 signatures to get on the ballot. In true Chicago tradition, others will be challenged and knocked off the ballot by the dozens of election attorneys primed to challenge every “i” not dotted or “t” not crossed.

Less than two months into the race, public officials who’ve thought it over and “decided” not to jump in number 26 and counting.

Potential mayoral candidates currently holding elected offices include: two State Senators, a State Rep, Alderman, Chicago City Clerk, County Treasurer, County Board of Review and U.S. Congressman. A former U.S. Senator and former U.S. Congressman (recently White House Chief of Staff) are also in the race.

All ten are proven vote getters. Most were elected to office with support from organized labor.

Other potential candidates include the popular Illinois Attorney General, several appointed public officials, two church pastors (one of them also a State Senator), a physician, artist, Teamster, civil rights attorney and founder of American Spectator magazine.

Chicago voters are in for a wild ride, thanks to a startling announcement made five months prior to the first open mayoral race in a generation! •

Dues help hold employers accountable

by Lynne Stiefel
President, Chicago Newspaper Guild

When we lose co-workers to layoffs or some of our pay to givebacks, it hurts more than just our own pocketbooks. Our Guild is also facing tough financial times, and your Executive Board is constantly keeping an eye on the budget. The Chicago Newspaper Guild is almost entirely dependent on the 1.8 percent of each member's gross wages it collects.

This is as good a time as any to review where your dues go.

- **Part of your dues supports our national parent.** Every Guild local pays \$20.41 for each full-time employed member, \$8.46 for each part-time employed member and \$3 for each General Press member monthly to The Newspaper Guild-Communications Workers of America (TNG-CWA).

TNG-CWA, and the broader CWA, have been losing membership in the last couple years. As you know, the crisis within the newspaper industry has hit locals and TNG-CWA hard. As a result, the percentage per capita paid by Guild locals to TNG-CWA dropped for the first time in its history (by 12 cents). The net result is that TNG is getting less income.

At TNG-CWA's July conference, delegates voted to divert payments that had been earmarked for the Guild Mobilization and Defense Fund to general oper-

ating expenses, so long as the fund holds at least \$1.25 million in assets.

- **Part of your dues support ancillary union organizations.**

Guild and CWA locals within CWA District 4 pay 30 cents per member annually to a registration fund. The Chicago Newspaper Guild and 11 other locals within the Midwest District Council pay the Council \$100 annually. The money is mainly used for twice yearly meetings that feature speakers and training.

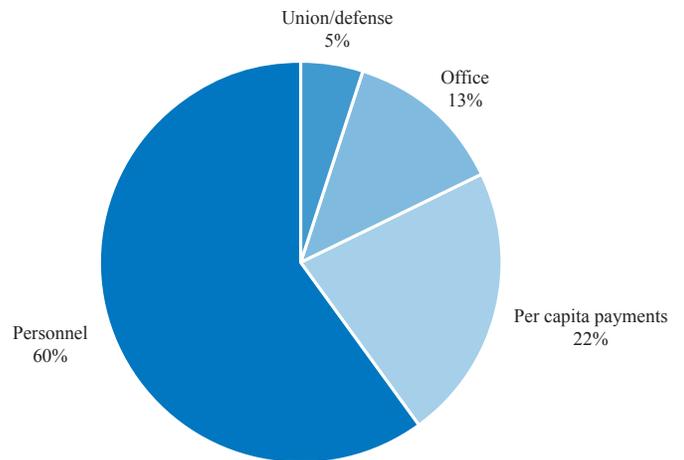
Our local also pays: 61 cents per Illinois-employed member monthly to the Chicago Federal of Labor, 47 cents per member monthly to the AFL-CIO, 50 cents per Waukegan News-Sun member quarterly to the Northeastern Illinois Federation of Labor and 2 cents per Joliet Herald-News member monthly to the Will-Grundy Counties AFL-CIO.

- **The bulk of your dues are used to run our local's operations and pay for services provided to our members.** We pay salaries and benefits for three employees — an executive director, general counsel and office manager — and rent and utilities for our downtown Chicago office.

We maintain a local defense fund, and pay our costs for arbitrations, outside legal expenses and Labor Relations Board proceedings.

We've kept expenses within budget, but revenues haven't been meeting expectations because of continuing layoffs and

How Your Money's Spent



the wage cuts imposed on union members of Sun-Times Media newspapers.

As we grow and seek stability during these challenging times, your Guild officers want you to know we recognize how hard it is to devote some of your hard-earned wages to your union. It allows us to fulfill our mission — to do our best to safeguard our careers and hold our employers accountable. •



General Press Unit Chair
Ralph Zahorik (right)
and Vice-Chair Tim
Campbell (left) have a
message for you:

“Pitch in. Help your union grow. Recruit a new member.”



Welcome to the Guild

Cook County Interpreters and Teamster Local 743 recently welcomed new members to their units. The union's strength at the bargaining table grows as the membership increases.

The Guild welcomes new members to our ranks:

Cook County Interpreters –
Ramsey Bacerott
Walter Mathews
Ruben Rodriguez
Kathleen Morris, a former member rejoining the Guild

Teamster Local 743 –
Kimberlyn McMorris
Jesse Stanton

We are the best advocates for the Guild and the most effective way to recruit more members. So, when you're chatting with fellow workers, remind them who's got their backs covered.

Each of us can help increase union membership. Keep sign-up cards handy. If you need cards, Ed Dunphy at the Guild office will be glad to send you some.

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Craig Rosenbaum, *Associate Executive Director/General Counsel*
Ed Dunphy, *Office Manager*

STAFF

Tim Campbell, Kathy Devine, Ralph Zahorik
[Listen Up! Editorial Committee](#)

Guild Unit news and reports

IOU (IL Federation of Teachers/IFT) Professional Staff – Management violated the contract by notifying the union that they will be eliminating two positions and transferring work without prior negotiations and agreement. A grievance has been filed. Also, arbitration is scheduled to resume Nov. 9 on management's refusal of voluntary reassignment of the grievance chair due to anti-union animus.

IOU (IFT) Support Staff – The Guild and management have settled a grievance with change of working conditions for the support staff. The union has held the grievance in abeyance with possible settlement.

Cook County Interpreters – Negotiations continue on economic issues but are stalled due to the change of county administration resulting from this year's elections. Two grievances have been filed.

Joliet Herald-News – Layoffs were grieved for a photographer and a sports reporter, both long-term employees.

Pioneer Press Editorial – Employees were transferred to Hinsdale. Four people were laid off in two days: one editorial assistant, two reporters and one copy editor. Grievances were filed by the union and are awaiting arbitration.

Sun-Times – The company has signed with DTI Company on universal desk. There's an issue with a retiree not being allowed to take his pension in a lump sum. Four editorial employees were laid off in late October. Several grievances have been filed in regard to no two week notice on layoff. A grievance has been filed on the discharge of one employee.

Waukegan-Lake County News-Sun – The company laid off two newsroom staff with no notice on Oct. 7. Editor-in-Chief Chris Cashman fired a sports reporter and a page designer, both long-time employees. "This company is going through rough times," Cashman told them. "I'm doing what I was told." One advertising rep was also laid off in the non-union Display Advertising Department. The Guild recently won four additional weeks of severance pay for another News-Sun reporter fired in December. Meanwhile, News-Sun has sold its Waukegan building and leased space in Gurnee. Newsroom employees will travel to the company office in Glenview through December, when construction on their new workspace is expected to be completed.

Teamster Local 743 Staff – A contract has been ratified. See article inside.

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Chicago Newspaper Guild

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