



The Four Winds

National Weather Service Employees Organization

Contract Connect

Highlights

- Second Remote Negotiations Session Brings About Some Progress
- NWSEO Providing Numerous Counter Proposals while Management Offers Few Counter Proposals in Return
- FMCS Mediator and Director of Contracts and Business Development - Joseph Swerdzewski & Associates, LLC. (JSA) step in as “intermediaries” as Negotiations Become Contentious
- Management Rejects Job Swaps and Will Not Commit to Job-Sharing within the CBA

(March 21, 2019) Negotiations for the new NWS-NWSEO Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) continued during a two-week remote session March 4th through March 15th, 2019. This was the first session between the Parties in 2019 as negotiations were delayed due to the government shutdown. While NWSEO prefers face to face negotiations, all CBA negotiations are now conducted via remote means using GoToMeeting/GoToWebinar.

As was the case with the first remote negotiations in November/December 2018, the NWS Chief Negotiator made it abundantly clear the only reason the Parties are meeting was because the Union indicated there were areas where movement or compromise was possible. NWSEO worked diligently to submit counter proposals on several articles, in many cases, using Management’s language word for word or striking language which Management said it found objectionable. Despite the Union’s good faith efforts, the NWS Chief Negotiator was not impressed. He said the Union’s proposals did nothing to move the Parties closer together. He also brazenly implied at one point that the Union was stalling like it often does to “extort” something, which of course, the NWSEO Chief Negotiator angrily and vehemently denied. Negotiations became so contentious during week 1 that the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) mediator and Director of Contracts and Business Development - Joseph Swerdzewski & Associates, LLC. (JSA) had to serve as intermediaries between the two parties to make some progress on the final day of week one (1). This did help, but unfortunately, a mediator was only present for less than half of this two-week negotiating session.

During this session, week 1 was centered around Article 20, titled “Work Schedules of Shift Workers” (NWSEO) and “Work Schedules of rotating Shift Workers” (NWS) which is one of the most important articles to bargaining unit (BU) employees.

NWSEO made many counter proposals throughout this Article to move closer to Management, while Management made few proposals. There were times in which there were discussions, and question and answer periods after NWSEO proposals. There were other times Management just dismissed the proposals, asked to move on, offered no counter proposals of their own and would not have any discussion about the counter that NWSEO presented. During week 1 of negotiations, the entire NWSEO team would speak and participate in discussions; however, that same team effort was not utilized by the Management team. The only person who spoke for the management team was the NOAA NWS Chief negotiator, while the rest of the Management team seldom if ever spoke during the negotiations. In fact, at one point during the negotiations, the NWSEO team queried the MICs about scheduling, which then led to a surprising retort from the NWS Chief Negotiator stating that if NWSEO has a question for a manager that the NWS Chief negotiator should be consulted first, and the other members of the Management team could answer if they choose. After the first week centered on Article 20, the Parties tentatively agreed to one Section and one sub-section.

The second week of negotiations centered around Article 14, titled Merit Assignment Program (NWS) and Merit Assignment and Placement Plan (NWSEO) and a part of Article 12, titled Discipline. Article 14 establishes the NOAA Merit Assignment Plan (MAP) as the vehicle for filling positions in the NWS. NWSEO and NWS offered counter proposals and there were several tentative agreements made.

NWSEO tried to get Management engaged with the NWSEO proposal on Job Swap/Position Exchange. A job swap or position exchange can be an alternative approach to placing Federal employees and is the reassignment of two (2) employees who swap jobs when no vacancy exists. If two (2) or more employees arrange their own job swap opportunity, they may petition the Agency for a job swap offer to be made to them. NWSEO asked the NWS Chief Negotiator if Management willing to accept anything in NWSEO’s proposal. The response was, “No, it is not worth talking about.”

Management and NWSEO had a discussion with regards to the [Internal Reassignment Program Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) which is set to expire in June 2019. NWSEO asked if the NWS was going to renew the MOU and the NWS Chief negotiator said that once the decision is made, the Union will be notified. NWSEO pointed out to the Management team if the MOU expires in June, things go back to the way it was prior to the MOU being signed.

There was also a lengthy discussion on job-sharing. There are currently employees within the NWS who are sharing a position or have participated in job-sharing in the past. However, there are currently no written guidelines for job-sharing within the NWS, and many employees and managers are not aware there is such a program.

The NWSEO proposes a formal job-sharing policy be placed in the new CBA to provide exposure to this concept and have it become an Agency priority. NWSEO attempted to get some cooperation from Management on this topic. Management admitted there are people sharing positions in the NWS, and the NWS Chief negotiator on several occasions said, "It's a past practice."

NWSEO said, "OK, then let's support this program, disseminate Job-Sharing opportunities to the NWS BU employees and have a consistent Policy on Job-Sharing in the NWS." The NWS Chief negotiator would just repeat himself that there is already a past practice on it and everyone that is participating in this negotiation session knows it exists. NWSEO said, that is untrue, and in fact, reiterated that MICs and HICs in the NWS do not even know that job-sharing exists, let alone a Job-Sharing Policy in the NWS. Management simply wanted to move on and not even discuss the topic. NWSEO pointed out to Management, this is another reason why the recently released NWS Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) scores are terrible with regards to work life balance.

Finally, the two Parties began work on Article 12, Discipline. While only a part of this Article was discussed, NWSEO did make counter proposals that did move closer to Management's proposal. There was a tentative agreement on a sub section on adverse action procedures. As mentioned, the Parties barely scratched the surface of this Article and there will be future Counter Proposals in Article 24 when the Parties meet again for another remote two-week session April 1st through 12th via GoToWebinar.

The NWSEO Negotiation Team for this session included:

1. Dan Sobien, NWSEO President & Chief Negotiator, Meteorologist, Tampa Bay Area, WFO (Ruskin), FL.
2. Mike Dion, NWSEO Headquarters Region Chair, Digital and Graphical Information Support Branch, NWS Headquarters, Silver Spring, MD.
3. Karleisa Rogacheski, Journey Forecaster, WFO Sacramento, CA.
4. Lauren Nash, Lead Forecaster, WFO Tallahassee, FL.
5. Jon Fox, Lead Forecaster, WFO Spokane, WA.
6. Bill Hopkins, NWSEO Executive Vice-President, Lead Forecaster, WFO Lubbock, TX (1 day only).
7. David Solano, NWSEO Secretary/Treasurer and Eastern Region Chair, Senior Hydro-Meteorologist, Middle Atlantic River Forecast Center, State College, PA
8. Dr. Nathan Becker, NWSEO Pacific Region Chair, Oceanographer, Pacific Tsunami Warning Center, Honolulu, HI (Week 2 only).
9. JoAnn Becker, NWSEO NCEP Region Chair, Senior Aviation Meteorologist, NCEP/Aviation Weather Center, Kansas City, MO (Week 1 only).

The Agency/NWS Negotiation Team for this session included:

1. Kenneth Brown, J.D., NOAA Attorney, National Weather Service Chief Negotiator.
2. Mike Vescio, Meteorologist in Charge, WFO Pendleton, OR.
3. David Murray, NWS Labor-Management Relations (LMR) Liaison, Silver Spring, MD.
4. Sally Pavlow Johnson, Meteorologist in Charge, WFO St. Louis, MO.
5. Ken Harding, Deputy Director, NWS Central Region Headquarters, Kansas City, MO (week 1 only).
6. Sam Albanese, Meteorologist in Charge, WFO Anchorage, AK.

Contract Connect, the negotiation newsletter for bargaining unit employees from bargaining unit employees, brings the latest news from the negotiations table to you. It is distributed as quickly as possible after each CBA negotiation session.

-NWSEO-

**No one cares more for National Weather Service employees
than National Weather Service employees.**

**No one works harder for National Weather Service employees
than National Weather Service employees.**

We are NWSEO.