



STAR BULLETIN

CEP LOCAL 87-M, SONG

March 7, 2013

VSP terms proving a real struggle

Delay only extends
period of uncertainty

*Next steps on layoffs will depend
on outcome of VSP talks*

The next phase of this dismal layoff business can't really begin until we finish negotiating the terms of a new VSP (voluntary severance program) for everyone to look at. The publisher said Monday that he hoped an agreement could be reached very quickly – as in a day or two.

This makes sense, as it is very difficult for anybody – individual staffers, Guild and company — to plan exactly how layoffs will play out until we know how many employees might volunteer to leave on a VSP. For example: If a more senior, untargeted employee within a layoff category opts to leave voluntarily, that should mean one fewer layoff in that category. That will change the number of total layoffs, the final cost (because everyone's financials are different), etc. What if others, in a related category, volunteer to leave? Will that reduce layoffs? That's part of the VSP negotiations.

We know staffers in every department are anxious for this information too, for the agonizing process to get rolling on other matters. We're sad to say that after several days of talks with the company, we still have no VSP deal. The company appears opposed to some of the terms and conditions we think are essential. We'll keep on with the effort, of course, but we are alarmed at how it's going so far.

In the meantime, we think it best to consider that the magical 90-day clock – for the required individual layoff notices, and for Guild alternatives to contracting out to be consider — has started, effective Monday March 4. This doesn't change the tasks ahead, but you should know that the clock is indeed ticking.

Please keep up all your individual efforts to stay together, support each other and send the company's senior managers a message. It all helps.

— Stuart Laidlaw, Star unit chair, and your Guild stewards and bargaining committee