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COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Swan Island shipyard workers reject contract offers

Shipyard workers at two Vigor Industrial-owned facilities at Portland's Swan Island have turned down new contract proposals.

At Cascade General, 221 workers narrowly rejected a tentative agreement in voting held Jan. 16. Workers are represented by the Portland Metal Trades Council, a coalition of 10 craft unions. The contract expired Nov. 30, 2014.

At Vigor Fab, 231 workers at facilities in Portland and Puget Sound, Wash., voted down a "last, best and final" offer — 226 to 5. Voting was held Jan. 14. Workers are represented wall-to-wall by Boilermakers Local 104. The contract expired on Feb. 28.

Vigor Industrial is the parent company of Vigor Marine at Swan Island, plus several other ship building and repair facilities in Seattle, Tacoma, Everett, Bremerton and Port Angeles. The company is owned by Frank Foti.

Last October, Foti brought in a new 960-foot floating drydock to Swan Island, opening Portland to new markets, such as cruise ships and post-Panamax vessels.

Shipyard workers at Cascade General, Vigor Shipyard, and Washington Marine Repair are covered under one master labor agreement negotiated and administered by the national Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO. The region's respective metal trades councils bargain local terms and conditions in side agreements.

The national agreement doesn't expire until June 2017.

After workers at Cascade General rejected their contract offer on Jan. 16, the sides returned to the bargaining table on Feb. 9. At that time, the employer rescinded a ratification bonus that was part of the first tentative agreement.

"The company said the ratification bonus was a one-time offer, and will not be put back on the table for discussion," said Brian Opland, business manager of Boilermakers Local 104, an affiliate of the Portland Metal Trades Council.

Union officials consider the ratification bonus equivalent to retroactive pay to when the contract expired in November.

"I think it will be very difficult to get to a deal without that

(retro pay) in there," said Bud Bartunek, president of the Portland Metal Trades Council and area director of Painters and Allied Trades District Council 5.

At the Feb. 9 bargaining session, Cascade General did agree to allow individual unions to select their medical plans. The rejected proposal had called for an across-the-board change from a 90-10 medical plan to an 80-20 medical plan. The premium on an 80-20 insurance plan is less expensive. Under the revised proposal, each union will be allowed to vote on which medical plan they want. However, those unions whose members elect to have better benefits will be responsible for covering the additional cost through a wage deduction.

Another bargaining session is scheduled for March 19.

Opland of the Boilermakers told the Labor Press no new talks have been scheduled at Vigor Fab.

Last year, Vigor Shipyard in Puget Sound implemented its last, best and final offer on workers represented by the Puget Sound Metal Trades Council. Workers then voted not

to strike. It takes a two-thirds majority to strike.

Vigor Shipyard is signatory to the master labor agreement.

Last September, Vigor Industrial unilaterally implemented a "no tobacco" policy at all of its facilities. In response, the Portland and Puget Sound metal trades councils filed an unfair labor practice complaint with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

A few weeks after the filing, several hundred shipyard workers at six Vigor Industrial facilities in Oregon and Washington conducted a one-day unfair labor practice strike during lunch break and at the afternoon shift change.

Opland said the NLRB Region 19 ruled in favor of the metal trades councils and ordered Vigor Industrial to rescind the policy. The company has appealed. A hearing is scheduled for June.

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