

Ed Barnes tapped Second VP of NOLC

Ed Barnes, a retired business manager of IBEW Local 48, was elected second vice president of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council. The vote, held Aug. 22, was by acclamation.



Ed Barnes

Barnes succeeds Everice Moro of Oregon School Employees Association Local 6732. Moro vacated the second vice president's seat after winning election as first vice president.

Barnes has been on the Northwest Oregon Labor Council Executive Board for 37 years.

JOBS

Google Fiber pulls the plug on Portland

So much for that idea. Google was all set to begin installing a high-speed fiber-optic network in Portland this year, but the company is shelving those plans. According to an Aug. 15 article in the Wall Street Journal, Google Fiber is exploring the use of wireless technology — instead of fiber — to connect homes, and is putting planned fiber roll-outs in Portland and other cities on hold.

Several Portland-area general contractors that employ union members had submitted bids to manage the work for Google, but they never got to the stage of signing a contract, says Tracy Harness, manager of the union-signatory Northwest Line Constructors Chapter of the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA).

Google Fiber has installed fiber networks in six metro areas around the United States, offering Internet at 40 times the speed of broadband for \$70 a month and cable TV for an extra \$60.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

At Malarkey Roofing Products, talk of a strike

By Don McIntosh
Associate editor

Labor relations have taken a turn for the worse at a North Portland roof shingle maker. Leaders of United Steelworkers Local 330 say family-owned Malarkey Roofing Products has hired a known union-buster to lead negotiations over a new contract for the plant's 115 union workers.

Consultant Jim Frazer of United Employers Association has proposed a near complete rewrite of the previous three-year contract, which expired May 31. Frazer is proposing to strip out key union provisions, and union bargaining team members think he may be trying to drag out negotiations until production slows after September.

Past negotiations were simple and short, says union Vice President Shawn Graham, a millwright at Malarkey. This time, managers began the negotiations saying they'd been too busy to come up with proposals.

"I said, 'How could you be too busy? You had three years to get ready for this,'" Graham recalls. "I have another job besides this, and I came up with a proposal. And you have a lawyer and all these managers and you can't come up with it?"

"That was a pretty good indi-

cation right off the get-go that we were going to have problems," says Local 330 President Bob Tackett, who's also executive secretary-treasurer of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council. Tackett said he observed several bargaining sessions where part-owner Greg Malarkey seemed to want to be reasonable, but was silenced by Frazer, the consultant.

"To hear the guy tell the grandson of the founder to sit down and shut up was a little weird, to say the least," Tackett said.

Malarkey Roofing has been family owned since Herbert Malarkey founded it in 1956. His son Michael Malarkey, president since 1975, died in 2012. The company has done extremely well in the last five years, Graham said. For about eight months of the year, the plant is in operation 24 hours a day. Workers have achieved productivity increases of 10 percent a year, and are now putting out 1.9 million shingles a week at the Portland plant, with no lost-time accident in the last three years. The company has also expanded, adding production facilities in South Gate, California, and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Both are nonunion.

Under the union contract in

Portland, wages range from \$16.50 to \$25.96, depending on job classification. But workers also get lots of overtime, including double-time for some weekend work: During high season, employees work eight-hour shifts 13 days in a row, followed by one Sunday off.

But now the company is proposing changes to 28 pages of a 32-page contract. It wants to add 21 causes for immediate termination (the current policy is standard union "just cause" language requiring progressive discipline.) And the profitable company is proposing annual raises of just 1 percent (the union proposes 5 percent). Malarkey also proposes to pay \$6.1 million to withdraw from the union's multi-employer pension plan. Instead, the company proposes to match employee contributions to a 401(k). [The union counterproposes that Malarkey put its current \$1.37-an-hour pension contribution into a 401(k).]

Malarkey also is proposing to get rid of two key union provisions: its obligation to deduct union dues from paychecks, and any requirement that employees become union members. The

provisions are known as "dues checkoff" and "union security."

"Trying to get rid of union security is the first step toward breaking down our union," explains bargaining team member Tom Souther. "People could come and have all the benefits and not have to pay for it."

As a consultant, Frazer has a decades-old history of involvement in bitter union disputes, including a 22-month strike at Voith Sulzer in 1996 in which 65 Machinists were permanently replaced; an 11-month strike by 65 members of United Auto Workers at Williams Controls in 2002; and a four-month strike at Cummins Northwest in 1999, where the strategy of permanent replacement contributed to the suicide of one striking Machinist.

Workers want a fair contract, not a labor dispute, Souther said. Except for a strike in the 1970s, Malarkey and the union have gotten along for 50 years.

"They're setting us up for a strike," Souther says. "They've turned down everything we've asked for. We're diehard employees for these guys, and it's just sick the way they want to take us out."

Glass contractor remains nonunion, and pro-union workers skedaddle

In a 9-to-6 vote on Aug. 24, workers at Heritage Glass said no to unionizing with Glaziers, Architectural Metal & Glass Workers Local 740.

Workers at the Northeast Portland company do high-end glass installations like glass doors and custom shower enclosures, for wages that range from \$12 to \$25 an hour. That's well below the union scale for the same work (\$37 an hour plus \$16 an hour in fringe benefits).

That's chiefly why Heritage employees contacted the union in July to see about unionizing. Local 740 is part of Painters and Allied Trades District Council 5. The council assigned organizer Mike James to assist the union campaign.

On July 24, when Local 740 asked the National Labor Relations Board to schedule an election, the union had support from a majority of the company's 15 employees. But an anti-union campaign by the owner per-

suaded several workers to reconsider support for the union. James alleges some of Heritage's tactics broke federal labor law, including threats that the company would close its doors if workers voted to unionize.

Still, James says he's not mourning the election loss, in part because it would have been challenging for the union to negotiate a single-employer first contract with an employer who is hostile to the union. Local 740's 21 union-signatory contractors operate under the same master agreement, and James said the union would never undercut them by offering better terms to a newly unionized employer.

After the vote, three pro-union workers left Heritage for better-paying jobs with union-signatory glass contractors. James said more may do the same as union jobs become available.



...Volunteers of America workers ready for a union

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ment improve, the client outcome improves," Lauer said. "If we become successful, it's ultimately going to benefit our clients."

So far, management hasn't

actively campaigned against the union. Nicholson said she hopes they'll remain neutral and respect employees' right to decide for themselves.

The vote will be held in person Sept. 14 and also by mail, with ballots due Sept. 28.

AFSCME represents Volunteers of America employees in New York and New Jersey, as well as workers in Portland at Central City Concern, Transition Projects, and Janus Youth Programs who do similar work.