

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Northwest Machinists members approve new four-year contract with Weyerhaeuser

Members of Machinists District Lodge W24 voted by a 69 percent margin Aug. 2 to approve a new four-year contract with Weyerhaeuser. It covers about 1,100 Weyerhaeuser employees in Washington and Oregon, including loggers, road maintenance workers, log truck drivers, log yard workers, and workers at Weyerhaeuser sawmills in Longview and Raymond, Washington, and Santiam and Cottage Grove, Oregon.

District W24 Lodge Directing Business Representative Noel Willet says the new agreement secures industry-leading compensation, with across-the-board wage increases averaging 16 percent over the life of the agreement. About 40 percent of members are in job classifica-

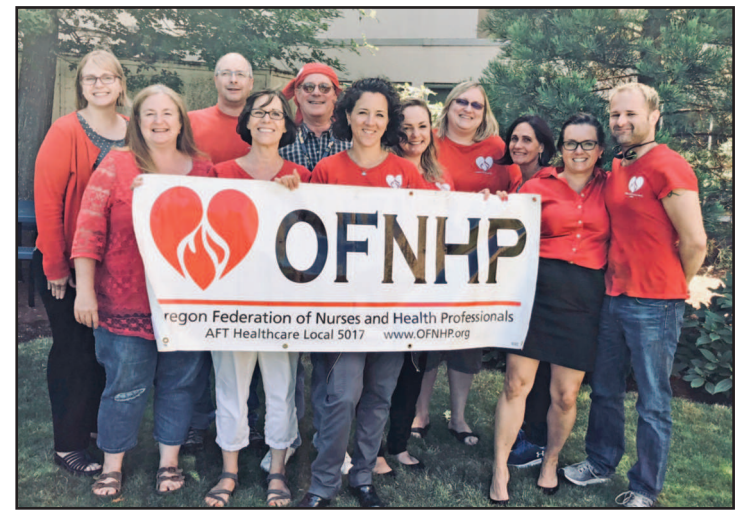


tions that will also get additional “bracket adjustments” of as much as \$4 an hour to keep wages competitive and attract and retain workers to the company. Current wages average above \$23 an hour, with some classifications like electricians and millwrights earning around \$35 an hour.

The new agreement does contain several features that members objected to. Weyerhaeuser will withdraw from the union-sponsored multi-employer health trust and instead

provide health insurance through a self-insured company plan. And going forward, Weyerhaeuser will contribute 5 percent of gross pay toward a 401(k)-style retirement plan for new hires — instead of the defined benefit pension that current members are in. Both those items were sticking points that led members to reject two previous contract offers — and authorize the union bargaining team to call a strike. Weyerhaeuser improved its final offer with an additional \$1.15 an hour to wages and dropped proposals that would have increased mandatory overtime and directed maintenance workers to do production work at its Cottage Grove mill.

The new union agreement runs through May 31, 2022.



Members of the bargaining team used their own paid time off to meet with management and bargain a first union contract.

Medical techs secure a first union contract at Sacred Heart in Eugene

A group of about 330 medical technicians at PeaceHealth Sacred Heart hospital in Springfield and Eugene, Oregon, ratified their first-ever union contract by a roughly 9-to-1 margin on Aug. 10. That’s after the workers voted to unionize last November by a more than three to one margin, joining Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals (OFNHP), an affiliate of American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

The new three-year agreement provides annual raises of 3 percent, plus additional raises of 1 to 3 percent halfway through the third year in order to get members on a unified union wage scale based on classification. It locks in the existing 401(k) retirement plan and health insurance for employees and their families. A new labor management committee will jointly administer a \$30,000 a year education fund for members to attend professional trainings. And the contract institutes standard

union contract rights like “just cause” discipline, a grievance process, and seniority rights, as well as a requirement that all represented employees share responsibility for union dues or fees.

But the gain that members are most enthusiastic about has to do with paid time off, says OFNHP president Adrienne Enghouse. Medical technicians were motivated to unionize when PeaceHealth management decreed that they would no longer accrue paid time off for overtime hours they worked, only on the first 40 hours. The new contract restores paid time off accrual for all hours worked.

Enghouse said there’s also been a shift in workplace culture at the hospital.

“They really didn’t feel respected or feel like their voice was heard,” Enghouse said. “The union has changed the tone of their relationship with management to one that’s more collaborative.”

— Don McIntosh



Drivers and supporters celebrate contract ratification at a rally prior to the Aug. 14 school board meeting.

Special ed bus drivers ratify long-delayed contract with Portland Public Schools

Special education school bus drivers voted Aug. 14 to approve a new two-year collective bargaining agreement with Portland Public Schools (PPS). The 71 to 9 vote followed over a year of bargaining between PPS and Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 757. Settlement was reached when PPS improved its offer even after it implemented what it had earlier called its final offer.

The agreement covers approximately 100 drivers who transport about 600 students with disabilities and special needs. They work 30-hour weeks consisting of weekday split shifts of three hours each.

The new agreement raises

starting pay to \$18.50 an hour — up from \$16.25 currently. The top rate for a driver with 25 years experience will rise from \$23.84 to \$25.75. A smaller set of raises are retroactive to the June 30, 2017, expiration of the previous contract, meaning drivers will get a check covering those raises for all the hours they worked during the last school year.

During months of school board protests, drivers called for the same pay as Teamster-represented truck drivers who transport food and supplies at the district. The new agreement makes progress toward that, but doesn’t reach parity.

“We really think this is the

best deal we could have got to without a strike, but at the same time it’s not nearly as much as these drivers are worth,” said Local 757 spokesperson Andrew Riley.

Local 757 also wanted limits on the district’s use of vans and cars to transport students who can’t travel with other students because of behavioral or discipline problems; they’re being driven by less-well-compensated drivers. The new agreement says the district may discuss that issue in a committee with representatives of labor and management.

The new contract runs through June 30, 2019.

Columbia Area Transit in Hood River signs first union contract with ATU Local 757

A group of 10 bus drivers employed by Columbia Area Transit in Hood River unanimously approved their first union contract, after joining Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757 last August.

The agreement provides an immediate 10 percent raise followed by three annual raises totaling 8.7 percent over the life of the four-year agreement. Wages currently range from \$12 to \$16 an hour depending on experience. Under the new union wage scale, newly hired drivers will start

at \$14.41 an hour and rise to \$20.20 after 10 years.

Drivers will also get a one-time \$400 retention bonus next July; employee-only health insurance, with an option to buy up for dependents; and a 401(k)-style retirement plan with an employer match of up to 3 percent of gross wages that employees elect to contribute. Lastly, the two sides agreed to meet to discuss whether Columbia Area Transit can contract out its planned Columbia Gorge express service to Portland.