



Questions & Answers

Why is the Kalamazoo community involved in our contract struggle?

Because saying one thing and doing another isn't right. Borgess management says "Borgess is, and always will be, about compassion, respect, and excellent, safe, quality healthcare."¹ But harassing us with mandatory meetings and abusive propaganda isn't compassionate or respectful; and gutting contract safeguards that allow us to be patient advocates, and which protect patients and nurses from unsafe assignments and workloads, isn't conducive to safe, quality care. If Borgess is going to claim that it will "[provide] excellent, safe, quality healthcare," then part of our job is to hold them to it. We know there are areas within Borgess that have significant patient safety issues. The protections Borgess is trying to strip from our contract (it is reduced from 98 pages to 39 under the Borgess proposal) protect us and protect the community. Our patients are the community. And many of them know that our fight is their fight. We have had a groundswell of support from community members who understand that their care is our top priority. They understand that an important means to that end is a good contract with patient safeguards and a guaranteed equal voice in the process. We will continue the bargaining process to reach a fair agreement, but we will not be pressured into a contract that removes patient and nursing safeguards.

Borgess has said that it is the union's desire to "disparage" the hospital as "part of [an] orchestrated campaign."² That claim is an example of what psychologists call "projection". Borgess is attributing its motives to MNA. It has been Borgess that has been engaged in a cynical game of manipulation, interrupting patient care in order to create a climate of fear within the membership. The union is committed to Borgess's success as a health care institution, but robbing nurses of their voice in their practice is wrong. Borgess may not like nurses telling the truth about their working conditions, but it is the truth.

¹Letter to Borgess Associates, 04/16/10.

²Ibid.



Where are we in the negotiating process?

Negotiations will be held on Thursday, April 29. A notice will be sent out regarding the results of the negotiations as soon as possible.

What is the procedure going forward?

There are a variety of procedures that could take place going forward in the negotiation process. Areas requiring a vote from the union membership could include a tentative agreement or a strike. At this time, no votes have been called for on any subject.

Should a tentative agreement be reached, the union membership will be notified of the date for the ratification vote. Once the vote is taken and the tentative agreement accepted, the implementation date would take place as stated in the tentative agreement.

Are we going to go on strike or get locked out?

The idea of a lockout is being fostered by Borgess to break your resolve and scare you into accepting its unfair contract. Keep in that mind that a lockout would be extremely painful for Borgess both financially and in the eyes of the community. Paying temporary nurses would become very expensive very quickly, and the community would be horrified. With 13 charges against Borgess being reviewed in the discovery phase of an unfair labor practice charge filed with the National Labor Relations Board, locking out over 700 nurses will not help Borgess's case. If a lockout happened at the hands of the Employer, MNA would mount legal challenges and call on faith, community, and labor leaders to support the nurses as well as provide numerous resources for dealing with banks, credit unions, etc. If Borgess is found to have engaged in unfair labor practices as alleged in our charges, any lockout would probably also be illegal, and Borgess would be required to compensate nurses for their losses.

Regarding a strike, the union membership would make that decision through a strike vote. There is no strike vote planned at this time. Our best scenario is to work

with management to develop a contract that meets both parties' needs and move on from there.

Do I have to be paid up on my dues to vote?

Yes. A bill for the funds that are normally taken from your checks should be arriving in the mail shortly.

Are my benefits safe while we're negotiating?

The Employer cannot unilaterally change the terms and conditions of the expired contract, which remains in effect (with the exception of dues collection and arbitration). In addition, nurses engaging in concerted union activities are still protected under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). Your wages, hours of work, and conditions of employment are protected by the NLRA as negotiations continue under a new contract.

When will the contract negotiations be done?

This question was asked several times at the recent membership meetings, with the following answer: "It will be over when it's over." Unfortunately, negotiations are not easy to predict and timelines in cases like these are almost impossible to calculate. The key is to stay focused, not frightened, and remember the ultimate goal – your voice in your nursing practice. Don't be swayed by rumor and threats of what might happen. Resolve to stay firm and fight for a contract that respects you!



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