Our first day of bargaining at Marion County was Wednesday, March 11, meeting for two hours in the morning. Our bargaining team (Jessica Hanson, Dana Finch, and Mel Breedlove), supported by our labor rep, came prepared to address the employer’s failure to provide the information we requested to prepare our bargaining proposals.

Even though we notified them a week before of our intent, the employer’s bargaining team did not seem prepared for such a discussion. Their point person on the request for information was absent due to illness. Their attorney acted as their lead negotiator.

We told them their inability to provide the data and their uncooperative attitude was discouraging and a disconcerting start to bargaining. Our team presented our ideas and words in a professional and polite manner, yet we clearly made our anger at their resistance known.

Their lead spokesperson strangely seemed to be out of the loop on the request for information email conversation (even though he was included in the thread). We provided another printed copy to their team. Their lead took our valuable meeting time to re-read our request for information silently to himself, even though he said he had received a copy, which was initially sent on Feb. 4.

They did not treat our request for information seriously and wanted to focus on ground rules for bargaining and scheduling additional bargaining dates. We told them differently. We said we cannot produce our proposals without the information we requested on the compensation plan, reclassification procedures, total payroll costs to calculate possible raises, and more.

We have legal rights under Oregon labor law to this information as long as it is relevant and specific. The employer did not seem to understand why we were advocating for the data. We marched them through each of our eleven specific requests and explained why it was relevant to working conditions. We also showed them that most of our requests were readily available to the employer and could be produced without cost.

The employer’s team could not explain why they were not providing us the information this bargaining round, when they provided it without question in 2016. Further, their lead bargainer did not know if they had fulfilled the request for information to the other unions, even though they have begun bargaining with them already.

It was not clear if their lead bargainer had received the follow up letter addressing these issues which we sent last week. He said they would have “something” for us one week before our next bargaining session, March 30.

When we began to schedule additional dates for bargaining, their lead bargainer didn’t even know we already had one scheduled for March 30. We now have these additional dates: Friday, April 19; Wednesday, April 29; and Wednesday, May 13.

We agreed to standard ground rules similar to our last bargaining round, except we insisted on no audio recordings of our negotiation sessions.

If you have any questions, please contact your ONA labor representatives, Gary Aguiar at Aguiar@OregonRN.org.