PMMC-ONA Contract Negotiations resumed Nov. 16 and the team met for several hours. ONA negotiators included Margaret Olney, attorney; Dan Richmond, RN, Float Pool RN; Vicki Knudsen, 2E RN; Chrystal Brunston, Endo RN; Stephanie Wolgast, OR RN and our new regional Labor Representative Misha Hernandez. The PMMC administrative negotiators included Dennis Westlind, attorney; Dan Mueller, senior legal counsel; Elizabeth Lagler, regional HR; Kate Kitchell, RN interim CNO; Meredith Gould, previous CNO/mentor; Alisia Howard, RN director; Bryan Jensen, director; Joan Resnick, HR; Jeremiah Jackson, RN manager; and Mark Flitcraft, RN manager.

We will meet again on Dec. 7 with future sessions being conducted via ZOOM. These sessions will be open to observers. We will provide a link in advance so nurses can join. Observers are critical to help show support for your negotiation team and ensure a fair contract. Your attendance also helps you understand the issues and witness the dynamics at the table.

We exchanged several contract proposals; with the understanding we already reached some minor agreements last spring.

We are really in the middle of contract negotiations after a hiatus and the proposals updated on the PMMC-ONA Bargaining Unit webpage this week. We gave the hospital financial proposals based on your survey responses and Rogue Regional Medical Center (RRMC) and Providence Systems new wage rates.

The hospital put their initial wage proposal from last spring back on the table and signaled they are willing and able to negotiate financials. Their wage proposal prioritizes a market adjustment or variable pay raises for various steps ranging from $0.21 cents (0.37 percent) to $1.84 (4.82 percent) with the highest raises for steps START through Step 4. They add a step by splitting the START RATE in half to Resident 1 and 2. This reflects management’s desire to recruit “beginner” nurses and make Medford more attractive for nurses to stay and grow their career.

Providence Medford Medical Center (PMMC) acknowledged that oftentimes nurses starting their careers leave Medford after a short period of time for a higher wage job, though they tend to stay within the Providence System. The hospital proposes one percent across the board raises in later contract years.

While we understand the need to be competitive in lower steps and are agreeable to a variable rate for initial raises, we also understand that any raise less than two percent for our experienced nurses is essentially an inflationary pay cut and unacceptable during a pandemic where experienced nurses are in the highest demand ever. Furthermore, experienced nurses provide the hospital stability and safe care to high acuity patients, are less likely to leave, and are needed to precept, mentor and support newer, less
experienced nurses. Also, because of how long nurses have gone without a cost of living pay raise and since we agreed to pausing negotiations recognizing the unknowns of the pandemic, we expect pay raises to be retroactive to March 31, 2020. We propose adding steps to create a 25 step pay scale with annual raises, which eliminates the two three-year gaps. We believe this further supports the desire for nurses to stay and grow their career at PMMC. We proposed a 3 percent across the board pay raise for later contract years. Check out the bargaining unit page for the actual proposals click here or go to www.OregonRN.org/pmmc and follow the links.

Survey Results

We had GREAT turnout for our negotiation survey despite only being open for one week and the US elections dominating that entire week. Over 140 nurses took the survey and provided insights into their priorities as we resume contract negotiations. We had solid participation from every unit and 60 percent of respondents have worked at PMMC up to five years.

Nurses left hundreds of comments on the survey. We have over 300 RNs at PMMC so if you missed the survey deadline, don’t worry we are actively improving communication capabilities, setting up a contract action team, and will have many more opportunities for you to make your voice heard and influence these negotiations.

Clear priorities in the survey include addressing competitive wages, increasing paid time off (PTO), addressing disruptions and protections related to COVID-19, staffing related issues (ratios, breaks, skill mix, new grads, assignments, etc.) and guidance on what an acceptable deal to transition from extended illness time-off (EIT) to short term disability (STD) needs to look like from PMMC.

The Extra Shift Differential was identified as the most important differential to increase. Also, we understand RRMC nurses made significant financial gains recently with increases to differentials.

Nurses Out Front: The Future of Nurse-Driven Health Reform

Nurses have not always been full partners in making decisions about health care reform despite their extensive frontline experience.

- What are nurses’ health reform priorities?
- How can nurses influence health policy?

If you are looking to make a difference, log on to an upcoming discussion on Friday, Dec. 11, 2020, hosted by Oregon Health Forum (OHF) and sponsored by Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). The event will also cover addressing systemic inequities and how they will shape future policy.

Click here to register for this free event today!

www.oregonhealthforum.org/2020/10/01/december-3-2020-nurses-out-front-the-future-of-nurse-driven-health-reform/