

[News](#)



by Dan Morris-Young

[View Author Profile](#)

[Join the Conversation](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

San Francisco — June 6, 2018

[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

Editor's note: This story was updated at 7:45 a.m. June 7 Central time with a response from the teacher's union about the letter sent to the archdiocese regarding purchasing.

After resoundingly rejecting two offers from the San Francisco Archdiocese within a month, members of the union representing teachers, librarians and counselors at the four high schools owned and operated by the archdiocese have entered June without signed contracts for the 2018-2019 school year.

Neither the union nor archdiocese appear clear on what might happen next.

As of June 6, no new bargaining session between the [Archdiocesan Federation of Teachers Local 2240](#) and the Archdiocesan Negotiating Committee had been scheduled.

Last week, the union's executive team forwarded results of voting to the archdiocese on what the negotiating committee has described as its "last, best and final" offer.

It was rejected by a vote similar to the 149-5 refutation of the immediate previous proposal, the union reported.

According to archdiocesan spokesman Mike Brown, the archdiocese "is prepared to return to the bargaining table at any time" and is also "interested in having a mediator join us to help facilitate an agreement."

In a June 5 email, union president Gina Jaeger wrote, "They have not communicated that information to us, nor have we discussed it as an executive board. That seems to be a 180 from their 'last, best, final offer' and unilaterally ending negotiations that last time we met in May."

"We are still working to finalize our next steps as a union membership, so we aren't ready to share those at this time," Jaeger added. "The membership is feeling extremely frustrated, angry at where the negotiations are, and a bit insulted by the last offer from the archdiocese negotiating team, so our next steps as a union will reflect these feelings."

Also in a June 5 email, Brown emphasized, "There is no stalemate and we remain very interested in returning to the bargaining table."

"On May 8, during our 10th bargaining session, we presented a last, best and final offer," Brown wrote in a previous email to NCR. "This does not mean we have ended negotiations."

"We continue to have informal communication with union leadership and are very open to considering any reasonable new union proposal," Brown said.

"We don't make unilateral decisions during labor negotiations," he added.

Union vice president David Pardini told NCR he was encouraged that the archdiocese was willing to resume talks but emphasized it would need to be clear "that the ANC would be willing to bargain in a meaningful way."

"My hope," Pardini said, "is that they realize that the vote was so overwhelming against their offer, that they need to be reasonable and come back with a better offer."

Wages, tenure and healthcare are the key issues at stake, said both Pardini and Jaeger.

The union officials declined to speculate what specific wage increases or other terms might ultimately be acceptable to the general membership.

The archdiocese's "best, last and final" offer included consecutive three percent wage increases over each of the next three years.

According to a [May 9 letter](#) from each of the four high schools' presidents to their faculties, the standing offer would also:

- Provide a "bonus payment" to members of \$750 on June 30, 2018, and \$500 on Sept. 15, 2019, if the offer had been accepted by June 1;
- Reduce some eligibility requirements for granting tenure;
- Clarify procedures for tenured employees in event of teacher reductions;
- Allow a new high deductible health insurance plan with low premiums;
- Provide "relief from attending certain school functions or required supervisory services for teachers writing multiple Student Letters of Recommendation."

"To date we have tentatively agreed to eight of the union's proposals while the union has yet to agree to any administration proposals, including our last wage offer," the school administrators' letter declared.

AFT 2240 represents about 160 teachers, librarians and counselors in the four high schools owned by the archdiocese — Archbishop Riordan and Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory in San Francisco; Marin Catholic in Kentfield; and Junipero Serra in San Mateo. There are nine other independent Catholic high schools within the archdiocese.

Advertisement

The Collective Bargaining Agreement, however, impacts about 200 employees in those schools. AFT 2240 is an "open shop" and eligible employees are not required to join, said Pardini.

Union negotiators repeatedly underscored that current negotiations must take into consideration that its members agreed to no raises for four consecutive years during the height of the deep U.S. recession.

"This means that on average over the past seven years the union received a one percent raise per year," Jaeger said in her email.

Describing the wage increases as "paltry," Jaeger said, "teachers can't afford to live in the communities where we work, our schools are struggling to attract quality educators, and it's especially infuriating when we've seen the tuition increases far outpace our salary increases."

According to Jaeger, "tuition over the past 10 years has risen at triple the rate of salaries," 19.9 percent for salaries, 59 percent for tuition.

"And while the salary and benefits package is deeply concerning to our union, the administration's proposals to seriously alter the terms of our tenure is, perhaps, even more disconcerting," she added.

"The administration argues tenure gives teachers 'jobs for life,' which is completely ridiculous and inaccurate," Jaeger said. "Our tenure simply affords us due process should the administration choose to dismiss a teacher."

In their letter to faculty and staff, the schools' presidents said the archdiocese's "final offer no longer includes renewable tenure and maintains the current tenure process, except for restricting displacement rights within each school instead of across the four schools."

In a response to the presidents' letter, the [union executive board compiled a narrative](#) to members that:

- Reiterated that "many of our teachers, especially the newer ones, are struggling to make ends meet in this most expensive region in the world," and that there are "foreboding signs" that schools face mounting "difficulty attracting qualified (faculty) candidates";
- Contends the archdiocese's claim that its "proposal represents a 15% average increase" for teachers by the projected end of the three-year Collective Bargaining Agreement in 2020 ignores that the local Consumer Price Index has increased more than three percent annually in recent years and is "forecast to continue upward at a comparable rate," while during the four-year no raise period the price index rose nearly 11 percent;
- Encouraged archdiocesan administrators to "creatively" seek new avenues of revenue "to solve the problem of undercompensating all their employees";

- Criticized the argument that pending wage increases should be "relatively modest" as a safeguard against economic downturn, arguing, "If the wage increases are nonexistent during the Great Recession and only 'modest' during our current boom times, when if ever will the archdiocese catch up its employees with the current economy?"

The current Collective Bargaining Agreement, which was ratified in 2015 by a 90-80 vote after a tumultuous confrontation between the union and the archdiocese over [controversial, proposed changes to the faculty handbook](#), officially expires on July 31.

According to Brown, that existing agreement "will self-renew on the off-chance there is no (new) agreement. But we remain in ongoing discussions with union leadership and are hopeful we will come to agreement."

Pardini said union leaders "will be coordinating through summer with our membership."

On June 4, NCR was provided a copy of a June 1 letter to San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone in which the union executive board criticized the prelate for what they charged was little meaningful response to a union appeal to the archdiocese two years ago to develop guidelines encouraging schools to give unionized companies priority in purchases. The missive specifically mentioned athletic gear and clothing.

The letter was also critical of a response to its appeal received, it indicated, about a year ago. The response had been signed by Jesuit Fr. John Piderit, moderator of the curia and vicar for administration.

NCR asked both the archdiocese and union if there are any connections between the June 1 letter to the archbishop and the labor negotiations.

In a June 5 response, Brown said, "We can tell you that this matter has never been raised or discussed at the negotiating table."

Peter Berkhout, a union representative from Marin Catholic, emailed late June 6 that the "letter sent on behalf of the union regarding athletic apparel is not related to the Union negotiations."

“However,” he added, “the Union sees as part of its responsibility to suggest to our administrations actions they could take to have a greater synchronicity between church teachings and the actions of our archdiocesan schools. This anti-sweatshop campaign has been underway for more than a year, predating our current negotiations.”