



City of Pittsburgh

510 City-County Building
414 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Text File

Introduced: 8/24/2020

Bill No: 2020-0653, **Version:** 1

Committee: City Council

Status: Adopted

WHEREAS, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette ("P-G") is presently embroiled in a labor dispute that could culminate in the first strike in its 234-year history and spell the end of the major daily newspaper in our City, an iconic daily so venerable it reported on the adoption of the U.S. Constitution; and

WHEREAS, a free, fair, and objective press, staffed by highly trained and deeply experienced journalists, is of fundamental importance to informing vital public debate on the major issues of the day; and

WHEREAS, recently, the Newspaper Guild of Pittsburgh Local 38061 and two other unions, representing 123 journalists and over 80 other workers at the P-G, have authorized votes to go on strike; and

WHEREAS, the P-G's newsroom employees have not received a pay increase in 14 years, and while newspapers themselves are experiencing financial hardships, the P-G's parent company, Block Communications, Inc. (BCI), remains highly profitable through related businesses that it built on the backs of its newspapers in the preceding century; and

WHEREAS, BCI has hired an out-of-state law firm known for its anti-union tactics, and management, through this counsel, broke off negotiations with P-G employees over 3 ½ years ago and on July 27, 2020, announced the imposition of a contract that strips employees of essential benefits; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to this contract, P-G employees' share of health insurance premium payments would more than double, and insurance coverage of healthcare expenses would not begin until a P-G family has spent \$3,000 in co-pays, leading to outcomes where health insurance for P-G employees will have an effective yearly cost of \$10,000; and

WHEREAS, BCI is also seeking to do away with considerations of seniority in layoffs, a tactic that has been shown over the last 50 years to place older workers at great risk of losing their livelihoods; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to another section of this contract, BCI can now convert virtually any P-G employee to part-time status, thus robbing all P-G jobs of their capacity to sustain hardworking Pittsburgh-area families; and

WHEREAS, the Newspaper Guild of Pittsburgh and the other unions representing P-G employees have made it clear that they are willing to resume talks at any time; and

WHEREAS, the last newspaper strike in the City of Pittsburgh resulted in the demise of the storied Pittsburgh Press, and since that time, the P-G has won two Pulitzer Prizes, been a finalist for those prizes three other times, and been the newspaper of record for the City of Pittsburgh; and

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WHEREAS, it is accordingly the judgment of the Council of the City of Pittsburgh that a labor stoppage at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette would be detrimental to the residents of the City of Pittsburgh, the P-G's employees, and BCI itself;

WHEREAS, the Council of the City of Pittsburgh is of the strongly held view that it is vitally important for both sides to agree to resolve this matter through reasonable discussion and fair negotiation in a spirit of good faith; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh hereby urges Block Communications, Inc., the Newspaper Guild of Pittsburgh, and all other labor unions representing employees of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette to resume negotiations immediately, in order to resolve the current impasse without resorting to unilaterally imposed conditions of employment or a potentially fatal work stoppage.