

Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital – United Steel Workers Strike Update

Volume 2 – August 3, 2023

Overview

- Union Leaders failed to get the deal they negotiated and agreed to ratified in a hastily scheduled vote on July 20, 2023.
- In an effort to avert an \$11.7 million dollar payment for replacement nurses that would staff the hospital if the union struck, the hospital proposed to increase the terms of the parties' July 17, 2023 Memorandum of Agreement, providing the union rescinded the 10-day strike notice it had issued, while the ratification process proceeded. The union refused and the hospital was forced to pay the \$11.7 million dollars to the agency on top of \$6.2 million it had already paid.
- While a strike loomed, the hospital did not receive any proposal from the union until August 1, 2023.
- Even if the counter was reasonable, which it was not, the counter was too late to avoid a strike. The union could not have ratified in time.
- That counteroffer was not made in good faith with intent to reach an agreement. In fact, the union increased its proposal at the 11th hour.
- The handwritten union offer contained terms relating to staffing that were extraordinarily outside of bounds from anything previously discussed. The offer was clearly designed to abruptly end the negotiation. It was disheartening to have tossed aside the hard work done to develop the collaborative staffing process we designed together and initially agreed to on July 13th and included in the July 17th MOA that the union endorsed. The handwritten counteroffer ignored adjustments for volume and acuity and suggested bonuses that are not fair or financially sustainable.
- In a last-ditch attempt to avert the strike, we made a counteroffer the next day (at 1:30pm on August 2). We advised the union that we would still agree to the terms of the MOA with a few refinements that were previously developed by the parties.
- Unfortunately, and on the eve of the strike, we have received no response from the union reflecting the union's clear desire to strike, irrespective a generous offers and concessions.
- The strike will begin at 7am tomorrow morning, August 4, 2023.
- We are prepared to maintain operations without interruptions.