

Voter Walk-Through

2022 Salary Survey Negotiation MOU

Per the terms of the CBA between FVRL and the WPEA, no less than every four years, the employer will conduct a salary review of all the wages for the classifications represented by the WPEA. This most recent negotiation was to bargain the survey that was conducted by Compensation Connections, the company FVRL hired for this purpose, per the terms of the CBA.

The CBA language is:

9.14 Salary Review

The Employer commits to conducting a salary review for the purposes of obtaining information as to whether the organization's current compensation structure, policies and practices are effective and in need of adjustment, no later than December 2021 and, to the extent practicable, at least every four years thereafter. The parties agree to meet no later than March of 2022 to bargain the impacts and classification placement of the salary review.

In years past, the membership of FVRL was very frustrated by the fact that the employer would say that the wages at FVRL were 'fine' and 'in line with the market' and 'comparable to other libraries' without having a source to reference for the statement. (Cite your work FVRL!) Without data to point to and illustrate that the employer's statements were inaccurate, negotiations were difficult. During the 2017-19 CBA bargain, your team prioritized having regular survey data and was able to secure this commitment from the employer to conduct surveys on a regular basis. The purpose being to work to bring the wages at FVRL to a real market value, and not some undocumented and fictitious market value that the employer adheres to. That was the core of what these salary surveys are meant to do.

So, for the negotiation of this study, that was the core objective of your Bargaining Team. And they did that for sure! (But wait...there's more.....!!!)

This Tentative Agreement has 3 components of achievement, and your Bargaining Team is proud to present this to you.

- 1) This negotiation brings all classifications to a minimum of 100% of market value per the current study.
- 2) Our members will now have representation at the table when the parameters are set for the next salary survey.
- 3) All represented employees will receive a lump sum retention incentive payment right before Christmas (\$3000 for full time employees and prorated for part time employees.)

What do each of those mean?

1) 100% of Market

The current market study showed us what the market values of each classification were in multiple spots and was then (for lack of a better term) averaged to provide a 'market range' of wages for each classification. In the past, the union has pushed back on some of the employer's data for being too restricted, or not looking at relevant parameters. This recommendation to FVRL was compiled from data from 7 different resources and then averaged together.

Your Bargaining Team was able to get the employer to ensure that all classifications are at LEAST at 100% of market. Some are even a bit higher!

Q: What does 100% of market mean?

A: Studies like the Compensation Connections study that we bargained are built to pull information from multiple sources and show essentially what the 'averages' are in each industry/arena/geographical location/etc. that is being compared. When you take a block of information from one group, then average it with the same block from another group, you can find what is considered the 'current market value' for that classification. Meaning, this is the average range of pay for people working in this classification. If the market study showed that the average range of pay for a job was \$18-\$25, but your employer was paying \$16-\$22 for the same work, then your classification would be at 89% of market. By increasing the wage scale for that classification to match (\$18-\$25), the employer would be bringing your classification to 100% of market.

Q: Why do some classifications get more of an increase than others?

A: We bargain overall wage increases and improvement to the wage scales during general CBA bargaining. (e.g., last year we bargained to get steps back and to get a 6% wage increase.) These salary surveys are not for individual wage increases like general CBA bargaining is. The primary objective of these is to ensure that there are not classifications at FVRL that are even more underpaid than others. The objective to get people equally close to a fair wage. To do that, we will have to make larger movements to some classifications than others.

Q: Doesn't that mean that I am being denied an equal raise?

A: No, it is the exact opposite. It means that (although we don't believe ANY of you are paid enough yet) some of your colleagues were being denied even more. In some classifications, the wage disparity was even larger than the disparity in another classification.

Q: Well then why are the percentages not all just 100%? (one is 101% but another is 104%)

A: This is an adjustment that we had to make and it was done in agreement with the employer and the union. Some classifications had to be a bit more to ensure that they all fit into the salary schedule properly. It is the same thing when we are placing people individually into the salary schedule. Someone may be right at a step so it is clean, but another may be really close to the next step, so we round up. (In this bargaining unit, we always bargain to round everyone up to the nearest step.)

2) Voice at the Table

Some may recall that the last Salary Survey bargain lasted 20 months, went down to the last minute for FVRL, and that we bargained from 9AM until 11PM that final night before we had an agreement. The last 5-6 hours were almost exclusively about trying to get the employer to collaborate with the union on the conditions and parameters of the study BEFORE it was done to eliminate errors due to miscommunication and misinformation. Even after all that time and energy was exhausted, we still couldn't get there. We agreed to a soft version on that issue and moved on to solidify the other benefits from that study.

Q: I heard that this Compensation Connections study had errors. Did it? Was it because we weren't at the table?

A: The employer would disagree, but yes we felt that the study was flawed. Not the actual data itself, that did not have flaws. However, the data wasn't always pulled using the same parameters. Unless all the same parameters are used, the data isn't comparable, especially when comparing things like 'market' that deal with geography, regional culture, and local economy. This data that we received from Compensation Connections wasn't wrong or a lie, but it didn't provide the clearest picture or the cleanest data.

The fact that this data was not pulled cleanly, as the union would have expected, was something that your Bargaining Team stayed on and didn't let slide. The employer was reminded that this is the second survey in a row

that was a bit sideways and we could have avoided most of this by talking and agreeing before the study was contracted out. Our members now have an equal voice in the room when these surveys are constructed, and parameters are set. This is an item that seems small, and has no apparent financial value, but will matter so much in the future for other WPEA negotiation teams!

3) Retention Bonus

This bonus is something that I personally am so proud of your Bargaining Team for! Although we always want to get better wages for our members, the parameters of this bargain were just for the results of the study in January from Compensation Connections. The employer wasn't required to engage in conversation about additional flat wage increases that weren't referenced at all. However, a team member pointed out the adjustment to social security payments in 2023 being raised by 8.7% and the joke was that if the Social Security Administration (who are arguably the slowest moving agency in the land to recognize inflation) are finally adjusting payments, then FVRL could get with the program too. Your team negotiated from the heart and painted a picture of some of the hardships that you are all enduring due to this crazy inflation. Although this was a hard sell, your team felt strongly about this, stuck with this issue, and negotiated passionately until the employer agreed to a payment that is the approximate equivalent of a year of the same 8.7% for the average employee. This was a huge win over and above what was originally on the agenda for this bargain. I hope you will please thank your team for their efforts on this. They did a great job, and I am super proud of them!

Q: Why was this being called a 'retention stipend'? Why is this not just retroactive pay?

A: After FVRL's most recent audit, the employer was made aware that there would be findings in their audit regarding retroactive pay. (Real English version is 'we are warning you that your audit scorecard will come back with deductions because you aren't supposed to be doing this retroactive pay thing'.) It was still in the 'heads up' stage but the notice had been given to the employer, so this did restrict our abilities, but that did not prohibit us from looking for more creative ways to approach this. Instead, your team, knowing that the state had just done a huge amount of 'retention bonuses' for state employees, pursued the same and were able to get additional compensation for our members in that way.

One last item that we would like to comment on for clarity is the final sentence in the MOU that requires any employee who voluntarily resigns to return the stipend payment. The exact language is:

As this is a stipend for continued employment, if the Employee resigns their employment with FVRL prior to January 31, 2023 the Employee will be required to repay the stipend less withholdings.

Your team pushed back against this provision, but very little time was left to complete bargaining. Continuing to push on this point ran the risk of the loss of this stipend entirely and your team knew that this small allowance was nothing in the face of a sizable financial boost at a time when it could be greatly appreciated by all.

Your team thanks you for all your support and input!

Dana Spain

