

## Deere Reaches Third Tentative Deal With Union in Attempt to End Strike

About 10,000 workers primarily in Iowa and Illinois have been out since Oct. 14. They rejected two previous contract proposals negotiated by the United Automobile Workers.



By Noam Scheiber

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The United Automobile Workers said late Friday that the agriculture equipment maker Deere & Company had made modifications to an earlier agreement that was rejected by its membership, setting up another vote over whether to end a nearly monthlong strike.

The strike began on Oct. 14, a few days after roughly 10,000 workers primarily in Iowa and Illinois overwhelmingly rejected an agreement negotiated between the company and the union.

The initial agreement would have raised wages 5 or 6 percent this year, depending on a worker's pay grade, and another 3 percent in both 2023 and 2025. It would have denied traditional pension benefits to future hires.

A second agreement reached in late October would have raised wages 10 percent this year and 5 percent in the third and fifth years of the six-year contract, while providing a lump-sum payment equal to 3 percent of annual wages in each of the even years.

It would have also given a traditional pension to future employees, which many current members had said was a priority, and created a new post-retirement health care fund.

But members nonetheless rejected that proposal on Nov. 2, albeit by a far narrower margin of 55 percent to 45 percent. Some workers suggested that the initial wage increase was still too low at a company that had projected nearly \$6 billion in profits this fiscal year. Others cited concerns about the company's performance incentive plan and felt the company's commitments to improving it were too vague.

After the second no-vote, Deere said that it had made a best and final offer and had no plans to resume bargaining. But the two sides have held discussions since then.

A Deere spokeswoman said by email on Tuesday that, "We are still in conversations with the U.A.W. and remain receptive to any proposals the U.A.W. might make," adding that "we have reached our maximum in terms of overall new costs."

The spokeswoman did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Saturday, and the U.A.W. statement did not provide details about the latest proposal or when a vote on the deal would occur. It referred to the proposal as Deere's "last, best and final offer."

Labor experts have said that the two sides can sometimes make adjustments to issues that aren't strictly economic at this point in a negotiation, such as a company's disciplinary policies.

The strike comes as many employers across the country are dealing with labor shortages, and workers appear to be taking a more assertive stance toward employers, leading to a rise in work stoppages.