

Podcast Transcription

Fly by Night: Introduction to the Negotiating Committee January 2021

Captain Chris Lee My guests today are Captain Pat May, Negotiating Committee Chairman, Captain Mike Weskalnies, Negotiating Committee member, and Captain Rich Brown, Negotiating Committee member. Thanks for coming, guys. Talk to the pilots a little bit about your background and experience on the Negotiating Committee, and we'll start with you, Pat.

Captain Pat May Sure, Chris. I started back with ALPA work around 2006. I worked on the Membership Committee. We briefed new hires there. From there, I moved into the committee chairman position and then after we moved out of Memphis and I became a commuter, I gave up ALPA work for a while. Then, we headed over to Cologne and we started up the base over there. The domiciles elected the block rep in 2011. So, I represented the FDA pilots on the MEC from 2011 to 2015 and again finished up my term there. And then shortly thereafter I was asked to come back and work as the NST, which is the Negotiating Support Team Chairman. I finished up after the contract was ratified and then came back after the previous Negotiating Committee finished up their work. I came back and interviewed for and was elected the Negotiating Committee Chairman in 2016.

Captain Chris Lee Mike, what about you?

Captain Mike Weskalnies Thanks, Chris. Pat invited me to join him on the Negotiating Committee back about 2016, and prior to that, I had been the R&I Chairman around the time that the FPA and ALPA merged in the early 2000s. After I left R&I, I went to law school, got my law degree, passed the bar and worked as an ERISA attorney for a few other pilot groups. I worked on the contract and bankruptcies with the Allied Pilots Association and I worked as a negotiator for the IPA during their 2015 contract, working on their retirement plans and such.

Captain Chris Lee And Rich, what about you?

Captain Rich Brown I've been here at FedEx for about 18 years. I spent around 10 years on the P2P, so communication with the pilots has always been really important for me. And then about two years ago, Pat asked me to join the Negotiating Committee. Part of the reason he brought me on is I have an analysis background. I got a math degree from the Air Force Academy.

Captain Chris Lee The committee, as it stands now, is quite experienced working with the Company.

Captain Pat May It's been busy for sure. There was a fairly long and substantial implementation list from the 2015 agreement. That really kind of started off our work as a group. And, like Mike mentioned, we've been working together since 2016. Rich came on the team about halfway through there and we've been working ever since. The OIMs and MOUs, these are just interim style agreements, not full Section 6 negotiations, but they're substantial. We've hit FDA agreements. We've had our TAD and TSUP, which is a training activity display and training support. Other agreements that we've worked on Chris since 2016 closed out sections such as Section 24. Section 24 was an entire rewrite and we ended up developing an OIM an Ongoing Implementation Measure, that was pretty substantial, but it closed a lot of open-ended issues for us. And there's been other big

agreements that we've had to negotiate, such as the 767 split bid back. And then finally, really, the last year we've been heavily involved in the China OIM. That was right out of the gate with COVID. Then the two subsequent MOUs and a safety agreement that we've completed. But I think what it does is it speaks to the experience level of this negotiating committee moving into full Section 6. We have four years as a team. So we know the players. They know us. We have established routines and our team has been built and worked through numerous issues with this company.

Captain Chris Lee With Contract 2021 bargaining starting later this year, let's talk a little bit about what the pilots can expect.

Captain Rich Brown Well, Chris obviously we've been doing quite a bit of preparation for Contract 2021 and as we move into 2021, some of the things pilots can expect to see are a contract comparison. We've developed that for an online release. You will be able to print out your own individually if you choose to do that. It also allows us to update the contract comparison if there are substantial changes to other agreements out there so we can keep everybody informed of where the industry stands as opposed to where we are at any given time. You can also expect to see an increase in the education coming out. We're going to provide some education on the Railway Labor Act (RLA) and how that affects our negotiations and then we'll move into other issues as we deem necessary as we move through the negotiating process. You can also expect to see surveys. Those will probably be smaller and more targeted than the previous surveys that you've seen so we can drill down into individual issues. We can also look forward to increased PUB events and just more communications in general coming out of the different committees and the negotiating committee.

Captain Pat May Yeah, it's a general ramping up that the pilots are going to feel as we get closer to the opener and our actual amendable date, which is not until November 2021. So it'll be a ramping up of information flow and the ability for pilots to come together in some format, whether it be, you know, online or in person.

Captain Chris Lee We have a lot of new pilots who have not experienced contract negotiations here on the property. We're throwing around a lot of terms like RLA, Section 6 and opener's. Talk a little bit about openers.

Captain Mike Weskalnies Chris, we engaged with the MEC probably about a year year and a half ago now to develop our internal targets and goals for the openers and we anticipate those openers in May, that's about six months in advance of our amendable date of November 1st, 2021. We'll take our direction from the MEC, which of course is the direct representatives of the membership, and we'll use our resources, our surveys, committee chairman, staff to develop our strategies.

Captain Pat May Yeah, great points, Mike. You know, some of those other resources that you'll see the MEC will tap into, in addition to what Rich mentioned, the committee chairmen are integral in our development of issues for the MEC. So we can be the direct link there. We've seen hundreds of issues being brought forward, but they highlight everything, right. Anything that can be looked at or should be looked at or recommended to be looked at we'll examine but what we do is filter these through. Really, it's a pilot driven contract negotiation. So the survey really is the top layer in that. There will be subsets of information that come in through contract enforcement, which will overlay on top of the survey. The committee chair bringing in information to us and recommendations. So all this ultimately acts as layers of cheesecloth where you're funneling out the best

ideas or the things that should be targeted most. And we provide that information. The MEC ultimately makes those decisions. They direct us and give us the guidelines and then we implement that through our openers with the Company and ultimately developing full proposals.

Captain Rich Brown The easy way to think about that would be that the MEC is the strategic oversight and the negotiating committee is more of the tactical situation.

Captain Chris Lee We often hear pilots ask, why don't we have professional negotiators for contract negotiations. Can you talk about that a little?

Captain Pat May Yeah, this is probably going to be one of the last times we talk about it, because we have hit it in a few areas already and it comes up. None of us take that personally. We actually appreciate it because pilots, what they're saying is, hey, we want the absolute best for our own pilots. We want to make sure that we are providing and giving ourselves the best opportunity to get the best contract we can. We do think that information there helps enlighten that viewpoint and that opinion. First of all, we do have professional negotiators that are not pilots, both at the national level and the local level. They are integral from beginning to end in that negotiation. The three of us and every other prior negotiating committee, they've gone through training. They go through negotiating training in person with ALPA National, with those same people that are the leaders from the staff side, the representation and legal attorneys up there, as well as seasoned negotiators. And what happens is you have from a national perspective, the collective bargaining committee, and I'm a member of that collective bargaining committee. We actually go out and we train other negotiating committees, new committees starting off. We're lucky enough to have Mike as an ERISA attorney and he's personally negotiated and helped assist negotiations for IPA and APA. So it's a well-rounded team. And pilots have to think for a minute when they came to FedEx, why did they come here? And it wasn't because FedEx is just a great company, it was also because we have a great contract. And we have a great contract, you got to think about who negotiated that contract before. It's been pilots that go in and negotiate the contract. Now we bring in the SMEs to our group, the Subject Matter Experts, through a variety of resources, you know, whether it's internal, other pilots, say it's the Safety Committee or the PSIT team, which again, are the pilot SMEs. But we also have staff SMEs in retirement and insurance. You know, we have ERISA attorneys at the national level. We have actuaries that come in from the national level. These people are staff professionals that have been in this industry for decades. The last thing I'll say about this is ALPA, the organization, the association is actually the premiere resource globally for negotiations. In other words, other airlines, independent airlines and smaller airlines come to ALPA National and sit in on our collective bargaining roundtables that we do. And they actually come to us for training and assistance with other areas such as economic and financial analysis, retirement and insurance. So, we really are the primary source of negotiating professionals in the industry.

Captain Chris Lee Our legal representation actually provide continuity because they've been involved with multiple contract negotiations over the years where there's typically turnover in the negotiating committee, correct?

Captain Rich Brown Yes, that's true. They have a lot of experience and knowledge of both the way FedEx operates and of previous agreements. Also, if you look at the industry in general, no one in the industry hires lawyers to do their negotiating for them, and there's a great deal of negotiating history back decades with these other airlines, and no one ever does that. And the reason they don't do that is because you want the pilots driving the

train. No one understands the contract better than the pilots that are out there living the contract. So we need pilots at the forefront. We need that backup from the lawyers and negotiators to help us to get to where we need to go. But the front line still needs to be pilots.

Captain Chris Lee How can the pilots help you as we move into bargaining?

Captain Rich Brown Well Chris, there are a lot of ways and something that we say often and we say it often for a reason is stay informed, stay engaged. Those are the big things. Read the information that's coming out from the union. Social media is great, but it's not always the best place to get the right information. Go to the source. If you have a question ask your rep, email the negotiating committee, talk to one of your P2P reps. There are all kinds of ways to get to the information. As you know better than anyone. Chris, we put out a lot of information for the pilots, and it's there for a reason so that if you have a question, you can get the answer. You can get the right answer. You can also, as we move into negotiations, take care of your situation financially at home. Make sure you've got that three to six months of savings built up. We hope that we don't need to go there. But if we do, we need to be sure that the pilots as a group can handle that kind of a situation. Volunteer, volunteer for committees. You can volunteer to help set up events. Show up. So like I said, we say it often and we hope people remember it, but it's stay informed, stay engaged and that's the best way you can help us out to achieve the best contract possible.

Captain Chris Lee Thanks a lot for coming. Any final thoughts?

Captain Pat May Chris thanks for having us today. I appreciate it. Just a few thoughts as we start the New Year here. About a third of our pilots are new here at FedEx and will be new to negotiations with ALPA or with FedEx. The stress levels are high operating out there in extreme conditions for a lot of the pilots. We would hope and expect our pilots to be leaders out there, especially the Captains. Share their stories of what's gone on previously in negotiations here. Enlighten the pilots without rhetoric. Give them the information and be a mentor to the new pilots that are here just through an information source, right. I think that will help us out a lot, understanding that these pilots haven't experienced that yet. So the pilots that have been around a while, have gone through it. Be ready to share those stories as we move closer to negotiations.

Captain Rich Brown One other thing I want to say about the influx of new pilots we have is, you all have experience different places and we have a lot of experienced union members coming from other places. Don't be afraid to offer up ideas or to talk about your experiences. You have things to offer as well.

Captain Pat May Don't be drawn into the sharpshooters, the anonymous sharpshooters online. We've said this before that that is really a volatile space to be in and it's loaded with risk for us for numerous reasons, and risk to the individual pilot and risk to what we're trying to achieve. It undermines what we are trying to achieve here for the pilots. So, it only is harmful for ourselves.

Captain Rich Brown And management is watching. They listen to that. They take note of everything that is said on there. The more we fight among ourselves, the less our unity matters.

Captain Pat May Yeah, we don't want this to sound like a cliché, but the pilots are operating in this extreme environment right now. They're delivering the purple promise.

They've been doing it for this past year under these extreme circumstances. And we're not going to be ashamed or embarrassed to go in and negotiate an industry-leading contract.

Captain Chris Lee Well, thanks again for coming, and thanks for listening. If you have any questions, please go to our website, fdx.alpa.org and utilize the [DART link](#). As always, be safe out there and we'll see you next time.