

Raley's employees delay strike; talks back on

By Kelly Johnson, Sacramento Business Journal

Raley's Inc. and union officials have agreed to return to the bargaining table, acceding to a federal mediator's request.

The renewed efforts to reach an agreement stall a possible strike at Raley's – at least until Sunday. The West Sacramento-based grocery chain has never been struck.

Representatives of Raleys and the United Food and Commercial Workers 8-Golden State and UFCW Local 5 will meet Thursday afternoon to try to agree on a contract. Raley's and the union have been struggling to come up with an agreement for more than a year.

“As a sign of goodwill, Raley's will delay the implementation of its last and final offer for 48 hours,” a Raley's spokesman said. “This extension will end on Saturday at midnight and, if no agreement is reached, the proposed contract will be implemented at that time.”

Raley's agreed to extend the current contract through Saturday.

“Perhaps the real possibility of a strike will compel Raley's to change course and finally begin negotiating in earnest for a settlement addressing the needs of everyone – both the company and union members,” said Jacques Loveall, president of UFCW 8-Golden State, in an online message to union members.

The union “is prepared to negotiate non-stop so long as a contract extension is in place. If a settlement has not been achieved by midnight Saturday and no further extension is agreed upon, a strike could begin on Sunday morning,” he said.

In a negotiations update earlier today, Raley's CEO Michael Teel told employees that Raley's has made its case for contract concessions to the union. Last December, he said, Raley's gave the union a list of 40 stores that were losing between \$500,000 and \$2 million a year. A month ago Raley's again shared with the union that it is "losing millions of dollars a year."