

Raley's, union back at negotiation table

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Raley's and the United Food and Commercial Workers on Sunday announced they have resumed negotiations in San Francisco as the two sides seek an end to a week-old strike.

UFCW Local 8 in Roseville said Raley's initiated the talks, a move that Raley's spokesman John Segale confirmed.

"It is abundantly clear to us Raley's desire to return to the (bargaining) table has been driven by the success of our picket lines and consumer support for our members," the local told members on its website. "Raley's chief negotiator contacted your bargaining team with a request to resume negotiations."

Union officials urged their members to continue picketing despite the resumption of talks.

"While this is a positive development, it is no time to let down our guard," UFCW Local 5 in San Jose said in a message posted on its website.

Few details were available about the new negotiations.

"Both parties have agreed to not discuss the progress of these talks while the current negotiations are ongoing," Raley's said in a prepared statement.

Raley's workers went on strike a week ago rather than agree to the company's demands for wage and benefit concessions.

The main sticking point is Raley's proposal to alter the health insurance plan, including the elimination of health care for retirees eligible for Medicare.

Both sides have been claiming success so far. Raley's has said sales, while reduced, have improved day by day, and that some union members have returned to work.

Union officials say they've kept picket lines intact and persuaded the vast majority of Raley's customers to shop elsewhere. About 80 stores are affected.