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News Item:

Wichita Police Accept Contract

05/02/2007

by John Boyd

After months of negotiations, Wichita police officers have accepted a new contract with the City of Wichita. The new contract features a raise and other benefits. The raise wasn't as high as officers wanted, but it was still more than the city budgeted for.

Police union members tell us they're excited that the negotiations are finally over, and while many say it isn't a great offer, it is a fair one and they'll take it.

Wichita police officers came by the Fraternal Order of Police lodge to place their votes Wednesday. More than 500 officers are eligible to vote on the three year deal.

The city's offer included a 4% raise each year on top of a 2.5% merit raise. Sergeant Chet Pinkston said, "I think if you just look at the four percent, that's not a fantastic offer for these officers, but when you look at the total package the city is offering, it makes it a better deal."

Under the contract, the pay would be retroactive to December 15th when the other contract ended. Besides the pay raise, the contract offer also includes other benefits including extra money for education and an increase in clothing allowance.

The city council still has to sign off on the contract.

The police union says this is a first step towards it long range goal to be among the top five best paid police departments in Kansas.

City, police union reach deal

4-19-07

BY BRENT D. WISTROM
The Wichita Eagle

After four months of working without a contract, the Wichita police union has reached a tentative agreement with the city on a three-year contract, the city announced Tuesday.

Neither the city nor the union president would release details of the agreement because the union's members have not been briefed.

"We want our membership to be the first to know on this," said Sgt. Chester Pinkston, the union president.

At its core, the disagreement was over how large of a raise roughly 650 police union members should receive.

Starting salary for a police recruit is \$16.95 an hour, according to the city.

Police were asking for a 6 percent raise; the city had offered 2 percent in addition to the 2.5 percent

merit increases police may get.

According to the city, a 6 percent increase would cost \$14.7 million over the three-year contract. A 2 percent raise, it said, would cost \$4.1 million.

Within a few days, members of the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 5 will be briefed on the agreement and vote on whether to accept it.

If accepted, the contract will be sent to the City Council for ratification.

In addition to raises, the union and the city have also disagreed over longevity pay, holiday pay, and cell phone allowances.

The tentative agreement follows complaints by both sides to the state's Public Employee Relations Board claiming the other was not negotiating fairly.

The dispute, which started in October, was recently mediated in Topeka. Both sides agreed not to talk to the media.

The conflict over raises set off protests by police officers in front of City Hall and a news conference where city officials said they may have to cut back on services or raise taxes to meet police demands.

Mayor Carl Brewer declined to give any details, but said the tentative agreement would not have a major impact on the city's budget, as previously thought.

"It's not going to be any tax raises or anything like that," he said.

City police deserve a fair pay increase

3-27-2007

This commentary was written by Chet Pinkston, Rick Moscicki, Brian Mock and Addie Perkins, who are members of the contract negotiations team for the Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge 5.

On Dec. 15, 2006, the employment contract with the police officers, crime scene investigators, warrant officers, station officers, detectives and sergeants of the Wichita Police Department expired. This is the second consecutive contract that the city of Wichita has allowed to expire without adequately addressing the concerns of the men and women who serve this community.

The Fraternal Order of Police feels that the citizens of Wichita have the right to know what has happened during this contract negotiation process.

Contract negotiations began with the city in June 2006. For this contract, the city hired an outside law firm to negotiate the contract with the FOP, at a cost of \$75,000. This later had to be extended by an additional \$20,000.

The city's pay proposal throughout the negotiation process has been unacceptable to the FOP. It has ignored the fact that inflation in the area is estimated to be more than 3.5 percent, and that other departments of comparable size were receiving higher adjustments.

The FOP had proposed a 6 percent cost-of-living adjustment. Though that number might seem high, it serves to close the gap with the other comparable departments. In 2006 alone, Kansas City, Kan., police officers received a cost-of-living adjustment of 4 percent, and Tulsa officers received an adjustment of 8 percent.

A neutral fact finder has ruled that both these departments should be used for comparison purposes for Wichita. The FOP, in the interest of signing a contract, made significant concessions during negotiations, including lowering the pay proposal.

Wichita is currently the 49th-largest city in the United States, yet the Police Department ranks 121st in pay when adjusted for cost of living. Without that adjustment, the Wichita Police Department falls to 164th.

In addition, an independent financial audit revealed that expenditures for public safety are growing slower than other city expenditures. This, in the words of the auditor, is "an uncommon trend" nationwide. The audit also reveals that the city has a healthy general fund, that the city has been performing above budget projections, and that the amount of revenue has been increasing.

In other words, the city is financially stable and growing.

Given these facts, the Fraternal Order of Police would like to know where the city's priorities are.

The FOP believes that the primary responsibility of a city government is to the public safety of its citizens, and that the current contract dispute does not meet that responsibility. However, despite the lack of a contract or the willingness of the city to come to a fair settlement, the members of the Fraternal Order of Police will continue to serve the citizens of Wichita with the same high level of service that you have come to expect.

Wage contract for police will undergo mediation

3-02-2007

BY AMANDA O'TOOLE
The Wichita Eagle

Wichita and its police union will go to mediation after failing to agree on a new three-year contract, the Fraternal Order of Police said Wednesday.

Steve Bukaty, the police union's labor attorney, said both sides were close to agreeing on the union's offer of a 13 percent wage increase over three years.

But the city offered 8 percent, he said, and the union rejected it.

It will take three to four weeks to meet with a mediator, he said.

The city's offer included a 2 percent raise starting July 1, a 4 percent raise in July 2008 and a 2 percent raise in 2009.

The union had proposed a 4 percent raise retroactive to December when its contract expired, followed by 4.5 percent each of the following two years.

"We tried like hell these past few days to roll up our sleeves and make a deal, but what do you do after getting slapped in the face?" Bukaty said.

Carl Gallagher, the city's labor consultant from Kansas City, Kan., said Wichita could not afford the union's offer because it would obligate itself to increase wages the same amount for other city workers.

"The question was whether the city could pay the freight on the offer," Gallagher said. "We tried."

Bukaty said the union will take its case to the public with four billboards that will go up Monday.

City Council member Jim Skelton said it is important for both the city and the union to resolve the issue.

"What I want to do is find a way to build better relationships. We need to get a solution here, in my opinion, as soon as possible -- try to get to bottom of this," he said. "This whole thing, the longer this goes on, the more my head aches."

Stalled WPD Contract Negotiations

2-16-2007

KAKE News

2/10/07 - Wichita Police have been working without a contract since December. Despite a new offer from the city, it looks like the cop contract battle is far from over.

For two months, members of the Fraternal Order of Police have been hitting the streets with picket signs. The big issue is pay. Police say the city is refusing to come up with a legitimate pay proposal. They say the city's latest proposal on Friday's was no different.

While the latest offer modified some the minor details of the deal, the hang-up is still on the amount of pay. The FOP says they've dropped their request of a six percent raise to 5.5 percent. That's still two to three percent more than the city is offering.

After almost 15 offers and counter offers, the FOP says they are done with negotiating. That may leave them no other choice than to go with a mediator. The mediator would conduct a study to compare Wichita to similar sized cities.

FOP President Chester Pinkston says while there is feelings of uncertainty for officers working without a contract, they won't sign until they get the deal they want. Pinkston says they need to go back to the table and talk about the proposal. Until then, he says negotiations are at a standstill.

KAKE News contacted several city officials for this story. They say they agreed the only place they will talk about the contract is at the negotiating table with the fop. However, they say they are still optimistic that a resolution will be reached and they are not at an impasse.

Stalled WPD Contract Negotiations

1-16-2007

The Wichita Fraternal Order of Police plan to protest Friday at City Hall. The FOP is in stalled contract negotiations with the city and hopes to gather public support for their cause.

On Thursday, city officials spoke about the negotiations to also garner support. City officials say they can't afford union demands.

"The city would have to decide whether to raise taxes or reduce spending," said City Manager George Kolb. "That could include a reduction in the police department."

The police union is asking for a 6 percent raise. The city is offering 2 percent. Kolb says anything more puts the city at financial risk. The city says it will cost 25 million dollars over three years.

"The proposal will put us in jeopardy," said Kolb.

But union leaders say they don't know where the city came up with those figures.

"I don't know what math they're using but it's nothing that I've ever seen in a school," said Sgt. Chester Pinkston, FOP President.

Pinkston says the city is using scare tactics to get their way. They say the city did the same thing during contract negotiations in 2004.

"At that time, Kolb specifically said if he gave police officers a 3 percent raise he'd have to lay off 30 officers and cut city services," said Pinkston. "I want to point out at no time 30 officers have been laid off not even one officer has been laid off. To the best of my knowledge no city services have been cut."

The current police contract runs out Friday at midnight.

Wichita, police union will resume negotiations

12-28-2006

The Wichita police union and the city withdrew complaints against each other today and agreed to resume contract negotiations that have been stalled for about three months.

A city-issued statement said: "... both sides have agreed to withdraw their prohibited practice charges; to withdraw the request for appointment of a mediator; and to return to the negotiating table.

"The City of Wichita and the FOP(Fraternal Order of Police) have agreed to make no further statements to the media at this time."

The statement comes after meetings in Topeka today where both sides discussed their positions with the presiding chair of the state's Public Employees Relations Board.

There is no indication of when negotiations will resume or why they withdrew complaints against each other.

Police & Wichita Back to Bargaining Table

12-28-2006

Reporter: KAKE News

December 27 - The Fraternal Order of Police and the city of Wichita have agreed to go back to reopen negotiations for a new contract. Both sides met with the Public Employee Relations Board in Topeka Wednesday.

Afterward, they released the following joint statement:

"With regards to the current negotiations: both sides have agreed to withdraw their prohibited practice charges; to withdraw the request for appointment of a mediator; and to return to the negotiating table.

The City of Wichita and the FOP have agreed to make no further statements to the media at this time."

Officers picketed outside city hall earlier this month on the day their contract expired. The FOP has demanded a 6% pay raise, while the city claims it can only afford a 2% hike.

City: Police pay request would raise taxes or cut services

12-18-2006

City Manager George Kolb said today the city would have to consider raising taxes or cutting back existing services to fund the 6 percent raise the police union has requested.

"Simply put, agreeing to these terms would require a tax increase of over three mills or priority review of other city spending," he said.

Kolb said he called the press conference because the city's contract with the Fraternal Order of Police expires Friday and he wants to give the public accurate information.

Contrary to police union's claims, Kolb said, the city is not losing many officers to other departments. Excluding retirements, he said, the attrition rate is 3.5 percent.

"That shows that police officers are satisfied with their careers in the Wichita Police Department," he said.

Sgt. Chester Pinkston, the union president, has said that over the past 10 years, more than 33 percent of the officers hired later left -- many of them for higher-paying jobs.

Based on union calculations, that may have cost the city more than \$8 million, Pinkston said.

Kolb said that the City Council authorized the city's negotiating team to offer the current 2 percent increase along with a variety of other benefits.

The council has not directed city attorneys to increase their offer, Kolb said.

The union and their supporters plan to protest at City Hall at 4 p.m. Friday to rally public support and

pressure the council to fulfill their requests.

Hearing set for police, city to state positions

12-15-2006

BY BRENT D. WISTROM

Lawyers for the Wichita police union and the city argued again Wednesday over who is being fair and who isn't in their deadlocked contract dispute.

Nothing was resolved, according to Steve Bukaty, who represents Wichita's Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 5.

But the state's Public Employee Relations Board scheduled a Dec 27 hearing in Topeka for both parties to detail their positions. After the meeting, the board's presiding officer could set a pretrial hearing -- the board operates much like a court -- or order the city and union to resume negotiations.

Meanwhile, police and other union supporters still plan to protest at City Hall at 4 p.m. Friday, a move intended to rally public support and pressure Wichita City Council members and the city manager to tell city lawyers to fulfill the union's requests.

Police are requesting a 6 percent salary increase that they say would reduce the number of officers who leave Wichita for higher-paying jobs at police departments in similarly sized cities.

The city estimates that could cost an additional \$25.9 million over the contract's three years.

The city has offered a 2 percent increase, which they say -- and the union disputes -- is essentially a 4.5 percent increase because of built-in 2.5 percent annual increases officers receive until their 15th year on the job.

A 2 percent increase would cost about \$4.1 million over three years.

Both the union and the city have filed complaints against each other in recent months.

Police allege the city is trying to delay mediation and fact-finding proceedings that would compare how similar cities pay their police and, if an increase is justified, show whether the city really has enough money available to fund the raises.

The city has claimed the union is not bargaining in good faith because it won't budge from its original requests.

FOP in Standoff with Wichita City Hall

12-14-2006

Reporter: Jeanene Kiesling

December 12 - A cop contract battle with the city of Wichita is heating up. KAKE News broke the story first last week and followed up with new information on Tuesday night.

So far, neither the police union nor the city has reached an agreement on a contract that is set to expire this Friday. Police are planning to picket city hall on Friday.

Just last week, when KAKE News asked Mayor Carlos Mayans about the current cop contract battle, he claimed the city manager had left he and the council out in the cold.

On Tuesday, the mayor was sticking to his guns - but he does admit city manager George Kolb sent out an email about the negotiations. It spells out the issues between the city and the fraternal order of police.

Officers want a 6 percent raise, but the city is offering 2 percent. The FOP won't budge. In the email

Kolb says what the FOP is asking for is "so far out of the realm of possibility we cannot even consider it reasonably"

Councilmen Carl Brewer doesn't agree with the mayor and isn't ready to give up that a deal might be done by the deadline.

Meanwhile others believe that's a long shot and whether the council should have been involved before doesn't matter - it's time for them to get involved now.

As of right now that protest is still set for this Friday at 3 pm

Wichita Police Contract Negotiations at a Standstill

12-14-2006

by Alana Rocha

The city and the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) can't agree on set raises for the Wichita Police Department. Now, those officers are planning a protest for Friday. That's when the current police contract expires.

Tuesday night members of the FOP started making signs for its rally. This is the third contract in a row that will expire because of failed negotiations. Officers say they're disappointed the city has let it get to this point.

Wichita Police Sgt. Rick Moscicki is the FOP Lodge 5 Vice President. He says, "A lot of disappointment. The officers will continue to work hard and serve the public. They took an oath to do that and they'll abide by that oath. They're just disappointed by the city, the council and the mayor that this has not been resolved."

About 300 Wichita Police officers and their families are expected to protest outside Wichita City Hall Friday.

Police: 2 percent raise not enough

12-12-2006

BY BRENT D. WISTROM

Wichita police say their wages have fallen below what officers are making in cities across the Midwest, but the city has not agreed to the 6 percent pay raise police say they need to catch up.

Instead, the city is offering a 2 percent raise.

Now contract negotiations between the Fraternal Order of Police and the city are stalled, and as many as 300 police officers and their acquaintances plan to protest at City Hall next Friday at 4 p.m. The current contract expires next Saturday.

Meanwhile, the city says the police are not negotiating in good faith because they won't budge from the 6 percent demand, and it has complained to the Kansas Public Employee Relations Board.

A ruling in the city's favor could force police to modify their demands and, most likely, make them reduce their request for a 6 percent raise, said Sgt. Chester Pinkston, president of Wichita's Fraternal Order of Police, which represents more than 500 active police officers.

Police base the 6 percent figure on a 3.7 percent cost of living increase and on national police pay surveys taken in 1993 and 2004.

"Neither side has offered to move from their position," Pinkston said.

State law prohibits police from striking.

But, Pinkston said, when salary increases don't fit with regional trends, the city loses officers to cities that pay better.

In a City Council meeting last month, Pinkston said that over the past 10 years, more than 33 percent of the officers hired later left -- many of them for higher-paying jobs.

Based on union calculations, that may have cost the city more than \$8 million, Pinkston said.

Carl Gallagher, a Kansas City lawyer representing the city, could not be reached Friday afternoon. City Manager George Kolb and several council members were at the National League of Cities meeting in Reno, Nev., and could not be reached.

Several other officials familiar with the negotiations could not be reached Friday afternoon.

But in past negotiations, the city has tended to dispute the accuracy of police figures that show police's pay is lagging behind that of their regional peers.

The city's offer of a 2 percent increase is apparently based on the City Council's recommendation earlier this year for a 2 percent raise for all the city's non-represented employees, although those employees can also get an additional 2.5 percent merit-based increase.

Mayor Carlos Mayans said he is not sure how much the city can afford to spend on police raises without reviewing current financial reports. But he said that cost of living is up about 3 percent and that the council recently gave City Manager George Kolb a 3 percent raise.

"I think that I agree that if we're going to be fair to everybody, that number (2 percent) doesn't appear to be realistic," Mayans said. "But that's just the mayor's thinking."

Mayans also said that council members were briefed on the negotiations about six weeks ago, but that he is not aware of any of the details about what the city and police are offering to each other.

"I think if you have contentious issues like this, the council should be appraised to see where we are and whether we're going in the right direction," he said. "I don't know whether the direction they're following is right or wrong."

Council member Paul Gray said city officials have adequately updated the council.

"I look forward to when the two sides can come to an agreement," he said.

Van Williams, the city's spokesman, also said council members have been updated with each development in the negotiations. The only thing new, he said, is that police are reaching out to media and planning a protest.

The stalled negotiations and coming protest are similar to the initial steps of negotiations in 2004, when the city and police fought for 16 months over pay, benefits and a drug-testing policy.

That battle ended with city officials agreeing to give police 3 percent raises each year for three years.

It was the longest contract battle since 1993, when police asked for a 15 percent raise over three years and campaigned with petitions and pickets.

The council eventually approved a 4.5 percent increase for the year, and the police union's lawyer called the raise "peanuts."

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