



City of Gilroy Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UPDATE ON CITY NEGOTIATIONS WITH FIREFIGHTERS

Firefighters Union Sees Agreement as “Unlikely” Until City Provides Final Numbers for 2009-10. Talks on Hold

GILROY – The City of Gilroy wishes to clarify the situation at the bargaining table with the Gilroy Firefighters Union, IAFF Local 2805. The City and Local 2805 have met three times over staffing and budget issues since December of 2009. While there have been delays, Local 2805 did agree to meet with the City’s labor negotiators. Yet, despite three meetings, Local 2805 has not provided a constructive response, or even made the effort to provide a counterproposal.

In November of 2009, the City requested that Local 2805 meet to discuss the possibility of staffing the City’s engine companies with three (3) personnel rather than the four (4) required by the current labor contract. This change would allow the City to reduce the brownouts of the Sunrise Station and increase the number of Engine Companies operating in the City. The parties met on December 1, 2009 and again on February 9, 2010. At the February meeting, the City indicated that it would be seeking budget concessions as part of any discussions over increasing the City’s staffing model.

The parties met next on March 11, when the City provided budget information and made a formal proposal to extend the provisions of the 2009-10 side letter (including furloughs and the elimination of pending wage increases) into FY 11. This would hold the pay for all Firefighters, Captains, and Engineers at their current levels, with no reductions and no increases.

“The Firefighters only gave us one year of concessions, while AFSCME, Gilroy Management Association (GMA), and unrepresented managers agreed to two years,” said Mayor Al Pinheiro. “All we are asking is that they hold their wages at the level that they have today – that’s the same thing that our managers and non-safety employees already agreed to.” The City will also be meeting later this spring with the Gilroy Police Officers Association (GPOA) to negotiate a new contract with the intent of achieving compensation and benefit reductions.

Local 2805 has not provided a counterproposal. “They indicated that they are willing to meet with us at any time, but that they won’t be able to respond to our proposal or reach an agreement until they see how this fiscal year ends and what changes are in the FY 11 budget,” said LeeAnn McPhillips. No new meeting dates have been scheduled.

“We won’t know how this fiscal year ends until late July at the earliest,” noted City Administrator Tom Haglund. “Waiting for Local 2805 to review that will put a real strain on our ability to budget for next year.” The City’s fiscal year runs from July through June. Without agreeing to extend their concession agreement, Local 2805 (Fire Captains, Fire Engineers, and Firefighters) will receive an 8.44% increase in compensation effective July 1, 2010 plus an additional 1.5% salary increase on January 1, 2011. Absent any other changes, compensation for Local 2805 members will increase by nearly 10% during the six month period between June 30, 2010 and January 1, 2011.

In the absence of Local 2805 continuing their concessions for a second year and in order to adequately respond to the City’s budget situation in the face of Local 2805’s delay tactics on reaching a mutual agreement, the City Council took the policy action to revert to a two fire station model for the city of Gilroy for the upcoming fiscal year. Under this model, the city will keep all 33 fire suppression personnel, but predominantly operate out of two stations, Las Animas and Chestnut, with Sunrise being operated only when the City is in an “overstaff” situation. To accomplish this staffing model, three Fire Captains and five Fire Engineers will be demoted to the rank of Firefighter. The council’s policy direction was approved on a 6-1 vote, Councilmember Arellano dissenting.

“I think it’s unconscionable,” said Councilmember Perry Woodward. “Just last week, the firefighters wrote a letter to the editor implying that they were negotiating with us – I think that includes responding to the City’s proposal in a reasonable timeframe. That’s just not what’s happening.”

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