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CITY OF SAINT PAUL

Talent & Equity – Labor Relations Division

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City of Saint Paul

Legal Framework & Roles

City rules:

- City Charter Chapter 23
 - Office of the mayor will carry on the day-to-day collective bargaining process
- Administrative Code Section 12.09
 - By resolution (two readings): Approval of collective bargaining agreements, setting of wages and salaries, and setting of other terms and conditions of employment Administrative Code Section 12.09



Legal Framework & Roles cont.

State of Minnesota statute:

- Public Employees Labor Relations Act § 179.A
 - Employer has an obligation to meet and negotiate in good faith with the exclusive representative
 - Negotiate terms & conditions of employment
 - Management Rights are maintained
 - Agreements can be between 1-3 years
 - Essential status of some groups



Current Status

- 25 unions organized into 22 collective bargaining agreements
- Approximately 98% unionization rate for workforce
- Trade Unions
 - Bricklayers; Carpenters; Cement Masons; Electricians; Elevator Constructors; Painters; Pipefitters; Plumbers & Sprinkler Fitters; and Sheet Metal Workers
- Traditional Unions
 - AFSCME Clerical; AFSCME Technical; Machinists; Operating Engineers Local 70; Professional Employees Assoc; & Tri-Council (Laborers, Heavy Equipment Operators, & Teamsters)
 - AFSCME Legal, Classified Confidential; Fire Fighters; Fire Supervisors; Manual & Maintenance Supervisors; Police Federation; & St. Paul Supervisors Organization
- Who is open?
 - Five Trades on 04/30/25
 - Twelve Traditional (not Police Federation) on 12/31/25



Bargaining Process

- Timing
 - The collective bargaining agreement is in force until the end of the contract.
 - The agreement remains in force while the parties are in negotiations.
 - Prior to the expiration of the agreement, the union must notify the employer that it wishes to negotiate – this is sent during the open window period (120-60 days prior)
 - Typically, negotiations begin in the summer or fall prior to expiration.
 - The time the process takes can vary between unions, but it is not unusual to have between 2-20 meetings which can last minutes or several hours.
- Bargaining teams are established
 - Union: President, stewards, various committee members, bargaining agent, attorney, etc.
 - Employer: Labor Relations member, department representatives, TER, etc.



Bargaining Process Cont.

- Issues for bargaining
 - Unions often canvas their membership for issues
 - The number of issues can drive the length of negotiations as the parties work through all the proposals
 - Not all issues are bargainable
 - On the City side, we meet with departments and establish priorities.



Bargaining Process Cont.

- Negotiations
 - Union opening proposal: All items that the union wants changed (wages, benefits, other terms and conditions of employment)
 - City response and opening proposal: City costs union proposals and discusses the impact/feasibility of union proposals and provides its opening proposals for the union to consider.
 - Negotiations then go back and forth until a tentative agreement (TA) is reached between the parties, or impasse is reached.
 - If a TA is reached, it is then put the membership for a ratification vote. If approved, it is then brought before the City Council to approve
 - If a TA cannot be reached, the parties proceed to mediation. If mediation is not successful, the union can proceed to strike or interest arbitration depending on their status



Key considerations

- Settlements in similar jurisdictions
 - City of Minneapolis, Ramsey County, State of MN, Met Council
 - Arbitrators often compare settlements/wage rates
- Pattern bargaining
 - Once a pattern is established – labor stability is promoted by keeping other unions equivalent.
 - Quid pro quo bargaining allows the parties to vary the pattern
- Labor Market
 - Still tight for some titles
- Market Study
 - Pattern bargaining doesn't account for significant market changes
 - The City is currently reviewing titles requested by directors who believe they may need adjustment



Key considerations cont.

- Civil Service Rules
 - Rules originated in 1914
 - Set up to promote merit
 - Have not been updated in 30+ years
 - City is nearing completion of a revised set of rules
 - City must give notice that it intends to change the rules prior to the start of negotiations
 - Council must adopt new rules



Final Thoughts

- Negotiations can be contentious
- Environment is volatile
- There is a process to address conflict – strike or interest arbitration

