

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
CONTRACTS COMMITTEE
MARCH 10, 2016
RESCHEDULED MEETING**

ATTENDANCE: Jeanette Herron, Co-Chair; Anthony Paoletto; Milta Feliciano;
Thomas McCarthy; Richard Salter

OTHER: Janene Hawkins, Director of Labor Relations; Rich Weiner,
Benefits Manager

CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

February 9, 2016 (Regular Meeting) February 29, 2016 (Special Meeting)

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER FELICIANO MOVED TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 9, 2016 (REGULAR MEETING) AND FEBRUARY 29, 2016 (SPECIAL MEETING).**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

56-16

PROPOSED TENTATIVE AGREEMENT WITH NEW ENGLAND HEALTH CARE EMPLOYEES UNION, LOCAL 1199, SEIU (NURSES) CONCERNING THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR THEIR MEMBERSHIP

Janene Hawkins, Director of Labor Relations, came forward to present on the item. She stated that the contract with the Nurses' Union has been outstanding since 2012, and when she came into the position, Council President McCarthy had already been attempting to rectify the contract situation for quite some time, but they had remained stalled. This was in part due to their presidential turnover, with 6 different presidents holding office during the life of the negotiations. After each new president was sworn in, negotiations would start anew, furthering the stallage. In addition, administration turnover further slowed the negotiations. Ms. Hawkins stated that they have now taken over the contract, and that the agreement they are proposing covers 2012 to 2019. She stated that the wages proposed for 2013 were able to go down by 2%, and that the increases in salary are reduced from the initial proposal. Ms. Hawkins stated that the

wage increases featured in this agreement are for one of the smallest of all the units, and that the total impact for the life of the contract on the City side is \$11,000. She stated that they are at a critical juncture, as they are already in arbitration, but are making an effort to resolve the contractual negotiations without further arbitration. Ms. Hawkins stated, in the new agreement, that direct deposit is mandatory, and the in-service training and conference fees remain at \$800. She stated that it is good to limit the amount allowed for that use. She stated that employees let go on or after July 2016 will not receive post-employment medical benefits, which will save the City a great deal of money.

Ms. Hawkins stated that she met with Marlene Siegel, Education Consultant for the Board of Education, and that Ms. Siegel assured her that they have the funds to cover this contract. Ms. Hawkins stated that she also met with Nestor Nkwo, Budget and Finance Official, and that on the City Side, they know the funding to be there. She further stated that Ms. Siegel is adamant about not wanting to go into further arbitration.

Council Member Paoletto asked if the total impact on the Board of Education's fees included retroactive pay, and if not, what that number would be. Ms. Hawkins stated that she did not have the dollar amount directly in front of her, and that she would have to get it.

The Chair asked if the Board of Education is certain they have the amount required to cover the salaries, given that there was the discussion of a \$20 million deficit as of a few days ago. Council President McCarthy asked for Ms. Hawkins to provide the difference and unique qualifications of this contract versus other contracts the committee has heard as of late, particularly AFSME, who was recently denied. Ms. Hawkins stated that the financial impact on the City side is the greatest difference, as AFSME's annual dollar amount numbers \$1.6 million. Council President McCarthy pointed out that AFSME has more members. Ms. Hawkins stated that it is \$11,000 vs. \$65,000 or \$2 million. The Chair stated that less employees, in this case, tend to make a lot more versus AFSME's roughly 100 paraprofessionals. The Chair asked how many nurses this number accounts for. Ms. Hawkins stated that there were 7 nurses on the Board of Education side. Ms. Hawkins stated that she did not have the exact number, and urged the committee members to not look at these contracts in aggregate, as each has a different financial impact, personal impact and set of circumstances.

Council Member Salter asked for confirmation that there are 7 nurses on the Board of Education side. Council President McCarthy stated that there is actually a nurse in every school, making the number closer to 30. Council Member Salter asked how long they have been working without a contract, and Ms. Hawkins stated that they have not had a contract since 2012. Council Member Salter stated that he had heard from several nurses he knows personally that they didn't have a contract. He further stated that he believes them to be similarly deserving of funding, and that they have received the short end of the stick by not having a contract.

Council President McCarthy stated that he can attest to Ms. Hawkin's account of the difficulties in negotiating the nurse's contracts. He stated that the City is not at fault for the timing, and that in most negotiations, there tends to be more union leadership stability.

Council Member Feliciano asked for clarity regarding the numbers of nurses for the Board of Education and for the City. Ms. Hawkins stated that she would be happy to get the figures for the committee. Council President McCarthy stated that the numbers consist of the number of schools in the City, 1 or 2 nurses for the parochial schools, and 3 nurses or so for the City, including a nurse practitioner who makes significantly more than the others. Council Member Feliciano stated that they need to be sure of the numbers so they can be sure of the budgetary impact. Ms. Hawkins stated that they have it down to the dollar amount, and that she could retrieve it for them. She stated that Ms. Siegel vouched for the amount of money and gave instructions to Labor Relations that they did not want to spend any more money in arbitration. Ms. Hawkins stated that they are clear regarding the number of nurses, amount of money, and the impact on the City side regarding retroactivity pay, numbering \$11,000.

Council Member Feliciano asked about the function of the nurse practitioner, and whether or not she oversees the school nurses. Council Member Feliciano stated she is asking because, while they have to understand the City impact, they also have to understand the impact on the Board of Education's side. Ms. Hawkins stated that they have gone back and forth with both the City and Board of Education during negotiations. Council President McCarthy stated that the nurse practitioner is largely responsible for firefighter physicals that are required by law, which the City formerly paid an outside individual to do. He further stated that the nurse practitioner is also responsible for some communicable disease functions. Council President McCarthy stated that Michelle Mead is her boss. Council Member Feliciano questioned whether the position is justifiable on that basis.

Council President McCarthy asked Ms. Hawkins if the retroactive amount of \$11,000 is accurate, as the amount seems low. Ms. Hawkins stated that the total amount is \$19,000, with \$11,000 of that amount being retroactive pay. Council President McCarthy stated that retroactive pay is 9%, making at least \$4500 each, and that he speculates \$19,000 is likely the real retroactive number. Ms. Hawkins stated that she would get them the numbers and the full breakdowns courtesy of Mr. Nkwo and Ms. Siegel. The Chair asked when Ms. Hawkins last spoke with Ms. Siegel. Ms. Hawkins stated that she met with her last week, and they are scheduled to have another meeting soon.

Council President McCarthy stated that he is absolutely in favor of the deal, as the nurses haven't had a raise since 2011. However, he stated that he doesn't think it is right to verify this deal for people who make significantly more than those in AFSME, who have been similarly waiting a long time for raises while making substantially less. He stated that they need more information regarding the figures.

The Chair stated that the committee needs the concrete figures regarding the contract. She stated that she is concerned that the Board of Education is claiming a deficit of \$27 million, but maintain that they can fund the nurses' salaries. She expressed concern that the committee will ratify the contract, and discover in a few months that the Board does not in fact have the money, leading to layoffs the contract was ratified in order to prevent.

Council Member Salter asked if the nurse practitioner also aided the police department. Ms. Hawkins stated that she did not know, and would do additional research on the matter. Council Member Salter stated that it may be more cost-effective to send the firemen to a doctor for their physicals. Council President McCarthy stated, in his former position, that they did an analysis and found it was cheaper to bring someone in house to do the physicals, but that the numbers may have changed over the years. Rich Weiner stated that whatever hourly amount was formerly calculated came out to be less, and that if the nurse practitioner finds something wrong, she sends them to a specialist either way.

Council Member Feliciano stated that the calculation regarding the cost-effectiveness of the nurse practitioner should be recalculated, as it is too old to be significant now. She further asked where private companies send their employees for physicals. Council President McCarthy stated that there is a higher standard for the firefighter physicals that may impact that. Mr. Weiner stated that OSHA requires the physicals. Council Member Feliciano stated that, as she is a nurse practitioner, it stands to reason that a doctor, who has a higher level of training would be able to satisfy that OSHA requirements, so it doesn't appear to be a different standard. Council President McCarthy asked, on behalf of the Council, that Ms. Hawkins take a look at the current cost-effectiveness of the nurse practitioner's position.

Council Member Feliciano asked why the post-employment medical benefits are different from union to union, rather than being the same across the board and mentioned AFSME. Ms. Hawkins stated that it depends on the dates, and urged the committee to address the contracts as isolated instances. The Chair stated that they take each contract separately, considering the persons involved, and job requirements. The Chair stated that AFSME supports the people who make the least amount, one position of which is literally the lowest paid position in the City. The Chair stated they have to be aware of the exact amount, so that the larger unit isn't hurting the City as much as some other areas are.

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT MCCARTHY MOVED TO ACCEPT ITEM #56-16 RE:
PROPOSED TENTATIVE AGREEMENT WITH NEW ENGLAND HEALTH CARE
EMPLOYEES UNION, LOCAL 1199, SEIU (NURSES) CONCERNING THE TERMS
AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR THEIR MEMBERSHIP.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO SECONDED THE MOTION.**

Council Member Feliciano stated that there are outstanding questions they wanted to ensure are answered before sending the item to the full Council.

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT MCCARTHY WITHDREW HIS MOTION.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER FELICIANO MOVED TO TEMPORARILY TABLE ITEM #56-16 RE: PROPOSED TENTATIVE AGREEMENT WITH NEW ENGLAND HEALTH CARE EMPLOYEES UNION, LOCAL 1199, SEIU (NURSES) CONCERNING THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR THEIR MEMBERSHIP.**

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT MCCARTHY SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

60-15

**PROPOSED TENTATIVE AGREEMENT WITH AETNA LIFE INSURANCE RE:
GROUP LIFE, ACCIDENT AND HEALTH INSURANCE POLICY FOR THE TERM
AGREEMENT APRIL 1, 2016 THROUGH MARCH 30, 2019**

Mr. Weiner, Benefits Manager for the City came forward to present on the item. He stated that this item concerns group life insurance for City employees, and that presently those benefits are provided by Hartford Insurance Company. This coverage expires March 31st, and in anticipation of this, his office did an RFP last fall under the auspices of the CT Public Sector Purchasing Coalition, comprised of an informal group of 12 municipalities, of which Bridgeport is a decade-long member. The purpose of this group is to leverage the purchasing power of a number of towns with common interests, always for benefits. Mr. Weiner stated that these interests are fairly common to all of the towns, so it doesn't become difficult to meet specific proposals or demands. He stated that this organization has done a great job helping them save money regarding life insurance, dental coverage, and prescription drugs. He stated that they can't use this Coalition for medical insurance, because the needs of the towns vary too greatly. Mr. Weiner stated that they save the money because this Coalition pools the purchasing power of 25,000 to 30,000 individuals.

Mr. Weiner stated that they received 10 proposals while doing the RFP, the cost of which was also brought down by spreading the cost amongst 13 towns, bringing the average cost of \$10,000 down to roughly \$1,000. They found that Hartford was not competitive over the past 3 years, and that amounts incurred from 26 death claims have exceeded \$800,000. He stated that they tend to go with the lowest bidder, but in this case selected AETNA, the second lowest bidder, a local company that has done business with Bridgeport before. He stated that they have an excellent service record in serving municipalities, for example, in the expediency with which they provide checks, which would be advantageous in the event that the Mayor wanted to make a condolence call and bring a check. Mr. Weiner stated that the lowest actual bidder was Minnesota Life, but they work through an intermediary and have no track record in Connecticut. He stated that the difference was minimal, about \$1100 less over a 3 year period. He further stated that they leveraged them from the initial to the final proposal for a lesser amount.

Council President McCarthy commented that the Coalition is one of the smartest things they've done, and that they do better than the Capitol in terms of savings. He stated that this advantage is very much due to the efforts of Mr. Weiner.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER FELICIANO MOVED TO APPROVE ITEM 60-15 RE: PROPOSED TENTATIVE AGREEMENT WITH AETNA LIFE INSURANCE RE: GROUP LIFE, ACCIDENT AND HEALTH INSURANCE POLICY FOR THE TERM AGREEMENT APRIL 1, 2016 THROUGH MARCH 30, 2019.**

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT MCCARTHY SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

56-16

PROPOSED TENTATIVE AGREEMENT WITH NEW ENGLAND HEALTH CARE EMPLOYEES UNION, LOCAL 1199, SEIU (NURSES) CONCERNING THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR THEIR MEMBERSHIP

**** COUNCIL MEMBER FELICIANO MOVED TO RESUME DISCUSSIONS RE: ITEM #56-16 RE: PROPOSED TENTATIVE AGREEMENT WITH NEW ENGLAND HEALTH CARE EMPLOYEES UNION, LOCAL 1199, SEIU (NURSES) CONCERNING THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR THEIR MEMBERSHIP.**

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT MCCARTHY SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The talks concerning item 56-15 resumed at 6:48 PM.

Ms. Hawkins presented the committee with documents from Ms. Siegel and Mr. Nkwo. The committee expressed their appreciation for Ms. Hawkins providing the documents. Ms. Hawkins apologized for not having the documents available at the outset of the meeting.

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT MCCARTHY MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT MARKED 'ALL CITY-WIDE NURSES EMPLOYEES CHART' BE ENTERED AS EXHIBIT #1-310-16.**

Council Member Salter asked for the total number of nurses. Ms. Hawkins stated that there are a total of 39 nurses, with 3 serving the City side.

Ms. Salter: total nurses?

The Chair noted that the amount of retroactive pay, according to Ms. Siegel, totals \$374, 783. Ms. Hawkins stated that this is what Ms. Siegel budgeted in the account. The Chair noted that the document is dated December 15, 2015. Council President McCarthy stated that, until a year ago, there wasn't enough money for there to be nurses in all the schools, and that the retroactive pay

is a much lower number than it has been in the past years. He stated that some of the payments will be given to a smaller number of people, and thus there is a lower retroactive payment amount. Council President McCarthy stated that while the City has consistently had 3 nurses, the Board of Education's number fluctuates, and thus is a more complicated formula to determine. Ms. Hawkins stated, upon speaking to Ms. Siegel again, she had found that they over-budgeted for the amount they had, and thus they have more wiggle room on the amount.

Council Member Feliciano asked where the number of 39 had come from. Ms. Hawkins stated that the number isn't listed directly on the documents, but was instead on the folder Ms. Hawkins has.

Council President McCarthy noted that the Board receives partial reimbursement from the State for the nurses provided to the parochial schools.

The Chair stated that the Board of Education pays for some positions, while other groups fund others. She stated that they like to be clear regarding the numbers, on who they are paying for. Ms. Hawkins stated that the City pays for their three nurses, and that she wished they had asked for Ms. Siegel to be present to field questions.

Council President McCarthy stated, regarding the amounts, that Ms. Siegel believes the cost will be somewhere in the \$593,000 range, while they only have somewhere in the \$300,000 range to fund the positions. Ms. Hawkins stated that Ms. Siegel entered the projection numbers and discovered that the amounts ended up being lower, at 2% rather than 2.5%.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SALTER SECONDED THE MOTION.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT MCCARTHY MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT
CONTAINING AN EMAIL EXCHANGE REGARDING THE NURSES AS #2-310-16.
** COUNCIL MEMBER SALTER SECONDED THE MOTION.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Feliciano asked, through the Chair, that they do the Council votes on this item, that Ms. Siegel be present so any questions can be answered. She also asked that Ms. Hawkins attend. Council President McCarthy stated that, if the item is voted out of committee unanimously, the item will go on the consent agenda and will require one of the committee members to call it off of the agenda for discussion. Council Member Feliciano further asked that Mr. Nkwo be present. Council President McCarthy stated that they should plan to pull the item off the consent calendar just in case, as the Council members will almost assuredly have questions, given the number of questions asked in the committee. Ms. Hawkins agreed, and stated that it would be more than fair for Ms. Siegel and Mr. Nkwo be present to answer questions regarding the specifics of the number crunching.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO MOVED TO ACCEPT ITEM #56-16 RE: PROPOSED TENTATIVE AGREEMENT WITH NEW ENGLAND HEALTH CARE EMPLOYEES UNION, LOCAL 1199, SEIU (NURSES) CONCERNING THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR THEIR MEMBERSHIP.**

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT MCCARTHY SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) VOTE IN DISSENSION (SALTER).**

54-15

PROPOSED ASSIGNMENT OF TAX LIENS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2016

**** COUNCIL MEMBER FELICIANO MOVED TO TABLE ITEM 54-15 RE: PROPOSED ASSIGNMENT OF TAX LIENS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2016.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER FELICIANO MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SALTER SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting ended at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Ramos

Telesco Secretarial Services