

## 2 percent raises included in new three-year deals for Adams County union employees

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By MATT HOPF  
Herald-Whig Staff Writer

The Adams County Board ratified labor contracts Tuesday night that call for 2 percent annual raises over the three years of the deals.



The contracts cover sheriff's deputies and sergeants, corrections officers, courthouse security and juvenile detention officers represented by the Fraternal Order of Police, and Highway Department workers represented by the Teamsters. Other contracts approved were for paramedics and emergency medical technicians, and employees in the offices of clerk/recorder, treasurer and state's attorney.

"Sometimes when both sides gave up a little bit too much, it was probably a fair deal," said Finance Committee Chairman Duane Venvertloh, R-7. "The union probably feels that way and the county probably does, too. That would indicate to me that it was a very fair contract."

The deals replace three-year contracts that expired at the end of November that provided no raises in the first year and 2 percent raises in the second and third years. The new contracts are retroactive.

Non-merited employees with the Sheriff's Department represented by the Machinists Union, such as animal control and courthouse maintenance workers, have yet to reach a deal and remain in negotiations.

The board discussed details of the contracts during a nearly 30-minute executive session before voting unanimously to ratify.

The contracts call for employees to enroll in an optional wellness program that would correspond with individual health insurance premium costs currently covered by the county.

Employees would be asked to meet certain health goals. If they meet a certain score or show improvement, they would continue receiving fully covered premiums. If employees don't participate, don't meet the goals or fail to improve their score, they will pay 5 percent of the premium the first year and 10 percent starting in the second year.

"If they're a healthier and more productive employee, they'll have less insurance claims," Venvertloh said. "We spend \$3 million per year on health insurance. The hope of the wellness program will be that everybody participate, everyone improves their health and they pay no premiums. But savings to the county will come in lower insurance claims."

Venvertloh also said the county will see reduced overtime costs for the ambulance service. The department will now be able to fill shifts with part-time paramedics and EMTs, which was not allowed in the previous contract.

Adams County Board Chairman Les Post lauded all involved in the negotiations. "I think we ended up with a contract that was fair for all those involved," he said.

Post said the negotiations took longer than usual as language in the contracts was cleaned up and the wellness program was introduced.

-- mhopf@whig.com/221-339

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