

## As police union continues protest, firefighters union reaches agreement with city



Bob Stephens doesn't cite specific examples, but these moments stood out to the News-Leader News-Leader


**Thomas Gounley, News-Leader** 6:34 a.m. CDT October 29, 2014



(Photo: NEWS-LEADER)

Outside Springfield City Council meeting on Monday, the union that represents the city's police officers entered its second month of protesting the city's unwillingness to meet its demands regarding a contract.

Inside council chambers, meanwhile, city officials and the union representing Springfield firefighters exchanged compliments as they discussed the agreement reached by the two parties (<http://www.springfieldmo.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/1171?fileID=20631>).

"I've been negotiating labor agreements for 25 years and I've never seen a labor organization better prepared or that did a better job for its members," said attorney Andrew Martone, who was hired by the city for the

negotiations.

"I do want to thank the negotiating team for the city," said Shawn Martin, president of Southern Missouri Professional Fire Fighters Local 152. "They've done an excellent job representing the city. They made it tough, which is exactly what they're supposed to do."

Although it still needs council approval, the collective bargaining agreement — which would expire June 30, 2017 — is the first of its kind in the history of the city of Springfield.

The Missouri Supreme Court ruled in 2012 that public bodies are required to collectively bargain in good faith with their employee groups. Previously, the city underwent a process with bargaining groups known as meet and confer, which was more informal and was revisited annually. In the wake of the ruling, the city entered into collective bargaining with the union in 2013.

While council could have voted to approve the agreement at Monday's meeting, Councilwoman Cindy Rushefsky requested that council be briefed on it before the vote — a request to which other council members were amenable. Provided such a briefing can be scheduled in the next two weeks, council will likely vote at its Nov. 10 meeting.

"Local 152 has been organized in Springfield for 96 years, so waiting two more weeks is not going to kill us," Martin said in response to the request. "We've been operating ... 96 years without a contract."

Martin said the process was fair but not easy; he noted it took more than a year to reach the agreement.

The agreement codified many work practices already in place, either as departmental policies or city rules, and establishes staffing levels and the grievance process for employees. It specifies what the city must provide in each fire station — the kitchens must have three refrigerators, for example,

and the television must have basic cable. There must be at least one treadmill and rowing machine, and dumbbells ranging from 10 to 60 pounds in 5-pound increments.

The agreement doesn't make any changes in leave time or retirement. Wage increases agreed upon for the current fiscal year mirror those already in place for all city employees — a 3 percent compensation increase that the union can allocate to its membership at its discretion. In the subsequent two fiscal years covered by the agreement, wage increases will mirror the percent change in the Consumer Price Index in the previous year. In 2013, for example, the index increased 1.5 percent ([http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2014/ted\\_20140117.htm](http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2014/ted_20140117.htm)).

While the city and the firefighters union reached an agreement, the Springfield Police Officers Association — which represents those lower in rank than lieutenant — has been unable to agree with the city on wages and is beginning the arbitration process. Last month, President Mike Evans called offers made by the city (</story/news/local/ozarks/2014/09/22/police-union-protest-outside-city-hall-tonight/16062403/>) up to that point "ridiculous."



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Police union, supporters protest outside City Hall

(<http://www.news-leader.com/story/news/local/ozarks/2014/09/22/police-union-protest-outside-city-hall-tonight/16062403/?from=global&sessionKey=&autologin=>)

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