

PRESS RELEASE

TO: Tom Tolen, WHMI

Jim Totten, Livingston Daily Press & Argus

FROM: Dennis Gabrian, City of Brighton Labor Attorney

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Last night, the Brighton City Council approved tentative labor agreements with all four (4) of its unionized bargaining units: Clerical, DPS, Police Patrol, and Police Command. The police units are represented by the Police Officers Labor Council (POLC), and the Clerical and DPS employees are represented by Teamsters Local 214. Before the Council vote, all four employee groups had ratified the negotiated agreements.

The contracts provide for a 1.5% general wage increase in each of the next three (3) years, beginning July 1, 2013. Employees have agreed to contribute 5% of their compensation to the funding of their MERS pensions. The pension contribution will be phased in during the terms of the contracts for the DPS and police units. Clerical employees had previously agreed to the 5% contribution, and the City will pay them a one-time "equity bonus" in recognition of their prior contributions. The contracts also provide for adjustments during the next 3 years to work rules, hours, scheduling, longevity, and reimbursement for equipment and college education.

The phase in of MERS contributions comes at a time when employees are being called upon to pay increasing amounts for their health care benefits. As part of their existing contracts, employees will begin making contributions for health care benefits provided to them by the City. The new contribution amounts range from \$33.20 per 2 week pay period for one person coverage, to \$92.47 per pay period for family coverage. These contributions will begin July 1, 2013.

These were difficult negotiations. It is never easy to ask hardworking and dedicated employees to accept less, pay more, and do more. The City of Brighton employees with their union representatives have repeatedly stepped up to face the fiscal challenges of these trying times. Their cooperation is recognized and appreciated. The Brighton City Manager, Dana Foster, summed it up best after the Council voted last night:

"I want to formally thank and acknowledge what all of our City's Union and Non-Union employees have done to participate and be part of a multi-year solution, that started in 2008 , to implement a combined short-term and long-term budget plan. Our employees' participation with reduced wages, a past 2-year furlough of 1 day a month without pay , increased out-of-pocket cost participation in health insurance , and new out of pocket cost participation in the City's required contributions to the MERS pension plan --- has been a critical element for maintaining a solid financial position for our city government. All of our City employees plus recent City retirees are also to be commended for absorbing more duties and workload in recent years as a result of our downsizing. We have reduced our total City workforce by nearly 20 % since 2008 by not backfilling positions following retirements and resignations. These four new approved collective bargaining agreements reflect that continued intent of all of our employees to step up and participate in what we need to do to maintain services while we continue to experience declining property values which has continued to result in declining revenues for our city government. "