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City Won't Drop Lawsuit In Police and Fire Benefit Dispute

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San Antonio City Council's Governance Committee declined today to withdraw a lawsuit challenging the legality of the 'Evergreen Clause' in the police and fire contracts, but held open the possibility of recommending dropping the lawsuit in the future, News Radio 1200 WOAI reports.

"Give the full council an opportunity to have a full and open discussion about the direction of negotiations," urged Councilman Cris Medina, who circulated the petition calling for the lawsuit to be dropped. "I think that we need to find solutions that we can all unite around, for the community."

Medina said dropping the lawsuit would be a show of good faith to the San Antonio Police Officers Association, which has broken off talks on the future of their 'zero premium' health care benefits, and the San Antonio Firefighters Association, which has not yet agreed to negotiations.



Many Council members say the reason they are not negotiating is due to the Evergreen Clause, which calls for the contract terms to remain in force for ten years after the expiration of the contract. So that means that even if no negotiations are scheduled, the current agreement, which includes the 'zero premium' health benefits, will remain in place through September of 2024.

Councilman Ron Nirenberg said it is in the interests of the police and firefighters that they not work for a city that's broke, due to overspending on public safety health benefits.

"Their jobs are infinitely more dangerous, the longer we go by and cannot hire additional officers because it costs too much," he said.

Councilman Joe Krier said unless an agreement can be reached on police and fire health benefits, property taxes may have to be raised, "at which point, I will become a former City Councilman," he said.

Mayor Ivy Taylor agreed that it is critical for both sides to return to the bargaining table, and she again appealed to both sides to refrain from 'inflammatory' public advertising campaigns. But Taylor said 'now is not the time for the City to unravel its negotiation strategy.'