

NEWS

# Consultants say city's math in public safety negotiations is spot on

By Josh Baugh | January 28, 2015



Financial consultants hired by the city said Wednesday that staffers had appropriately calculated the costs of labor contracts proposed by both the city and the San Antonio Police Officers Association.

Among the consultants' findings were that the city's latest contract proposal, made Oct. 21, would maintain the cost of public safety at no more than 66 percent of the general fund. They said that if the council were to agree to the union's proposal, it would lead to major budget shortfalls in the coming fiscal years.

Mayor Ivy Taylor said she was encouraged by the consultants presentation to council members and is pushing for a quick resolution to negotiations over new labor contracts.

"I am still hopeful that we can get to a point of middle ground," Taylor said. "We've made

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offers that have been consistent with the information that's been received today. I won't say that there's no flexibility. We all want to get to the finish line, and we recognize that 'negotiation' means that nobody gets exactly what they want."

The police and fire unions' labor contracts expired on Sept. 30, 2014 and now are in a so-called "evergreen" state — most of the contracts' provisions remain intact, but salaries don't increase.

Earlier in the day, the council's Governance Committee, led by Taylor, deliberated Councilman Cris Medina's request to drop a lawsuit against the unions. The city filed suit late last year, asking a state judge to determine whether the evergreen clause is a violation of the Texas Constitution.

Though there were enough votes to kill Medina's request to withdraw the suit, Taylor instead tabled the issue and said the committee would revisit it at next month's meeting.

Union boss Mike Helle said he was disappointed that the city continues to push on with the suit, which he thinks will be won by the union. He said the union is eager to get back to the negotiating table because its team wants to dive into the numbers behind Wednesday's presentation from the consultants.

"I'm very curious as to the assumptions they used," he said.

Councilman Joe Krier said he gathered from the consultants that "the city has been making the correct assumptions on how to calculate the impact of changes in its union contract, and that we've been calculating that against the correct portion of the budget, as is done by other, comparable cities."

The city and the police union are now poised to exchange actuarial studies conducted on their

health care proposals and could be back to negotiations by next month.

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