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Public safety chiefs: Stalled contract talks not hurting recruiting

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Departments outside San Antonio running recruitment ads

News

POSTED JANUARY 08, 2015, 6:16 PM

UPDATED JANUARY 08, 2015, 6:46 PM



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VJ, Reporter

SAN ANTONIO - The leaders of the city's police and fire departments said Thursday they are not worried about stalled collective bargaining negotiations hurting recruiting.

"The collective bargaining and contract negotiation process is something that occurs periodically and is par for the course. We don't believe it has adversely affected our recruiting efforts, nor do we expect it to," said San Antonio Police Chief Anthony Trevino.

"Every year more than 3,000 people seek out, apply and test to wear our uniform. I am not concerned that our firefighters or potential candidates will seek employment anywhere else but here in San Antonio," said San Antonio Fire Department Chief Charles Hood.

Recently, outside departments have run radio and social media ads in San Antonio trying to poach potential recruits away from the Alamo City. Trevino said it is common practice for departments to recruit this way, and SAPD does the same. But police union president Michael Helle said departments are keeping a close eye on the ongoing fight over police and firefighter health benefits, and the specter of a prolonged fight could make other departments more appealing.

"Houston and other markets that accept lateral transfers, those folks are smart, they know the dynamics of what is happening here in San Antonio," Helle said. "They know that our young officers are very well trained through this academy."

When asked whether recruiting efforts are being hurt by stalled talks the city released the following statement: "We have thousands of applicants each year for police and fire positions and our wage and benefits packages are at the top when compared to other cities. It is common practice to recruit qualified public safety applicants from other cities. We also recruit from other major Texas cities and military installations."

On Tuesday, District 7 Councilman Cris Medina filed an official request asking the city to drop its lawsuit against the police and firefighters' union over the 10-year "evergreen clause" in their contracts. The City Council Governance Committee will discuss the item later this month.

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