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**STATE OF OHIO STATE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS BOARD**

**IN THE MATTER OF FACT-FINDING BETWEEN:**

**CITY OF LAKEWOOD, OHIO (Employer)  
and  
LAKEWOOD PARAMEDIC ASSOCIATION (Employee  
Organization)  
CASE NO: 03-MED-11-1357**

**FACT-FINDING REPORT OF THOMAS R. SKULINA, FACT-FINDER**

**HEARING**

A mediation meeting was held on July 8, 2005 at Lakewood City Hall. Some matters were resolved but some were at impasse. The fact-finding meeting was then conducted on September 23, 2005.

The employer was represented by Marc J. Bloch, Esquire and Meredith A. Lobritz, Esquire of the firm Duvin, Cahn & Hutton. The employee organization was represented by Robert M. Phillips, Esquire of the firm Faulkner, Muskovitz & Phillips, LLP.

**BACKGROUND**

1. Employer

The population of this city has been on a steady decline. From 70,173 persons in 1970, the number has dropped to 56,646 in 2000.

In a report by Moody's in 2004, it reported "Given continued weakness in the regional economy, Moody's believes the city will be challenged to regain stability in its fiscal operations and strengthen its financial position". In 2005 Moody's downgraded the rating for Lakewood bonds to Aa3.

The present General Fund has decreased over the years. It decreased seventy-seven percent from year end 2003 to year end 2004 leaving a \$900,000.00 balance. This is the lowest forward balance in almost fifteen years. It faces a possible deficit which would require draconian acts to prevent same, such as lay-offs or a RIF.

This inner ring community gets most of its revenue from income taxes and the Local Government Fund (81%). It has taken in the task of directly collecting its income taxes. The administrative costs had advanced with an agency collecting same for the city's behalf. It will not be free since employees and office resources must be set up. But these employees shall themselves pay income tax to the city. It will take some time to see how much can be saved and how long it shall take to acquire a fiscally secure budget balance.

## 2. The Employee Organization

The fifteen paramedics that originally constituted the Lakewood Paramedics Association are full time employees employed by the City of Lakewood in the Division of Fire. (There are thirteen still employed).

These paramedics were formerly employed by Lakewood Hospital. In 1999 they were offered employment by the city.

Upon employment they initially became members of the Lakewood Association of Fire Fighters, IAFF Local 382. After two years, the fact that they could not legally belong to this union since they were not qualified as fire fighters, caused them to form this present union.

They are distinct from fire fighters who also hold emergency medical certifications and may be referred to as "firemedics".

A significant distinction occurs in the pension systems. Paramedics are under PERS retirement and firemedics are under the Police Fire Pension system.

Because of an unequal difference between the two plans, the contract in Article 4 adopted a Community Service Recognition. This provided an annual supplement payment based on completed full years of hospital paramedic service. This benefit ranges from as high as \$8,400.00 for the most senior person to \$350.00 for a person with only one year of hospital service.

**ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED IN FACT-FINDING**

Agreement has been achieved for Article 3 Wages; Article 5 Longevity; Article 13 Sick Leave; Article 12 Funeral Leave; Article 3 Hazmet Specialist; Article 17 Medical Insurance, except for the date contributions to premium begins; Article 26 Trading Times.

Left at issue:

1. A proposal by the employer that the Community Services provision be eliminated.

**FACT-FINDING RECOMMENDATION**

There shall be no charge.

2. A proposal that as the fire fighter's wages shall be adjusted by an across the board 1.456% increase on December 31, 2006, the same shall take place for the Paramedics.

**FACT-FINDING RECOMMENDATION**

Effective December 31, 2006 all wages shall be adjusted. Every Paramedic's wages shall be increased by 1.456% on December 31, 2006. (Article 3).

3. The union has accepted the city offered plans for medical insurance Article 17. The parties differ on the commencement date of contribution to premiums.

**FACT-FINDING RECOMMENDATION**

Premium contributions begin as of July 1, 2005.

4. Trading time 26.05 union seeks that approval for trading time more than four hours requires permission from the Fire Chief.

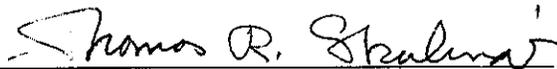
**FACT-FINDING RECOMMENDATION**

Trading times for more than four hours must acquire permission from the Fire Chief.

There were a number of issues that I understand were agreed upon, hence no findings.

These were listed earlier.

The fact-finder shall not propose separate vacation procedure nor shall he impose a "memorandum of understanding" on the parties regarding "me too". Instead for this contract, significant gains achieved in the Fire Fighter's Collective Bargaining Agreement, as well as that of the Police Collective Bargaining Agreement, have been either agreed upon by the parties, or reflected in the provisions that were recommended by this fact-finder.

  
THOMAS R. SKULINA  
Fact-Finder

DATE ISSUED: October 11, 2005