

SUBMISSION

This matter concerns the fact-finding proceedings between the City of Rocky River (hereafter referred to as the "City") and Northern Ohio Firefighters (hereafter referred to as the "Union"). On December 11, 2015 the State Employment Relations Board appointed William J. Miller, Jr., as Fact-Finder for this matter.

The Fact-Finding proceedings were conducted pursuant to the Ohio collective bargaining law, and the rules and regulations of the State Employment Relations Board, as amended. The City and Union previously engaged in the collective bargaining process before the appointment of a Fact-Finder.

Prior to the hearing, the parties submitted detailed position statements to the Fact-Finder in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code. These statements have been reviewed and carefully considered. The Fact-Finding occurred on December 15, 2014. The following issue was considered during Fact-Finding:

ISSUE:

Wages

Union Position:

It is the position of the Union that an equity raise, in the amount of 1%, should be established effective January 1, 2016. Additionally, the Union proposes an additional raise of 2%, effective January 1, 2016, and a 1% raise, effective July 1, 2016. It is also the position of the Union that it proposes to raise the officer differential for lieutenants to 13.5%. The Union asserts it was the only bargaining unit to defer negotiated raises two years in a row, in 2011 and 2012, in an effort to help the City during the economic recession, and helped to set the tone for negotiations with its patrolmen in 2013, in which patrolmen and officers received zero percent raises. Furthermore, the Union contends the raises it received in 2013 was bargained for back in 2008. It should be noted in addition to deferring agreed upon raises in 2011 and 2012, the firefighters received 0% in 2014 and 1% in 2015, and a 1% raise received July 1, 2013 as an equity adjustment between fire and police. However, the intent of the equity raise was nullified by the Rocky River Police Department not deferring an additional year and receiving 1% July 1, 2015.

City Position

It is the City's position that the wage increase for employees in the bargaining unit be increased 2% effective January 1, 2016, and the lieutenant's salary be calculated at 12% above the second year fireman's salary. The City contends it has been on the road to financial recovery through conservative budget management, and has been attempting to build its general fund balance. The City contends a significant element of conservative

budget management is to maintain wages as a model of consistency with various factors such as the Consumer Price Index (CPI), consideration for parity in wages across the board within the City with both Union and non-Union employees, together with maintaining competitive wages throughout the immediate geographic communities. The City asserts the CPI for the Northwest Greater Cleveland area for September 2015 has determined that local prices are down .4% over the past year. In fact, over the past three years the CPI has averaged significantly below 2% and usually has hovered in the area of 1%. With respect to comparable cities, the Rocky River Firefighters continue to be in the middle of the firefighters in the west shore cities but with the consideration of the education allowance, longevity payout and uniform stipends put them at the top of the benefit structure. With regard to the differential between lieutenants and second year firefighters, the City contends there should not be a change in the differential, because this was not part of the issue to be reopened. Therefore, for all of the reasons submitted, the City requests that a 2% increase for firefighters and a 12% differential for the lieutenants be adopted.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I have carefully considered the facts and arguments of the parties in conjunction with the issues which have been presented. What is very clear to this Fact-Finder is that there has been a very good effort, with much success by the City, in improving its financial position as it recovers from the great recession. Undoubtedly, much of the success is clearly the result of the administrative leadership in making the correct financial decisions. It is also readily apparent that during the difficult period, the City has been able to enlist the cooperation of the various bargaining units in deferring wage increases to assist in stabilizing the finances of the City. In my considered opinion, one of the keys for the City to have attained this cooperation was adhering to one of its key principles; that is, its consideration to parity in wages and wage increases across the board within the City for both Union and non-Union employees. The record reflects the City has done an admirable job in seeking parity, but due to the manner in which wage freezes have occurred, and wage increases have occurred, there has been some lack of parity between the firefighters and police. While I do believe the City has had good intentions to maintain parity, it is my belief that some adjustment is necessary to bring about better parity between the police department and fire department bargaining employees. This adjustment, coupled with a fair wage increase of two percent (2%) would help the City attain its goals of parity with its safety forces. I would therefore recommend the following wage increases for the firefighters:

Effective January 1, 2016 2% wage increase

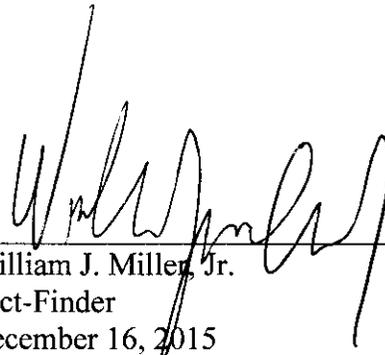
Effective July 1, 2016 1% equity wage increase

Regarding the request for a 13.5% differential between lieutenants and second year firemen, while I clearly understand the City's concern that this was not an issue for the wage reopener, it is my belief that upon carefully reviewing the applicable Agreement

lanague, the issue of the amount of differential between the lieutenants and second year fireman is an appropriate issue for bargaining. In light of the desire of the City to have parity between employees, it is my recommendation that the differential between lieutenants and firefighters after two years be 13.5%.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this Fact-Finder submits his findings and recommendations as set forth herein.



William J. Miller, Jr.
Fact-Finder
December 16, 2015