

Riverside County Bargaining Update (July 13, 2016)

I met today with the County's chief negotiator. Initially the County had indicated that they were interested in a one year deal with no changes. They are now indicating that they want a three year deal with no new money. To go three years without any COLA, or at least additional steps being added to the salary ranges, isn't something to which we could agree.

A number of small proposals of ours that were relatively small cost items were adamantly rejected by the County. There were one or two small things the County was willing to do, but they are insistent that any deal be cost neutral. They are also looking for concessions- the biggest one being cutting your step advancements in half- to which we would never agree. I do not see any way we can agree to a multiyear deal that is cost neutral, nor do I see us making any concessions that reduce our members' incomes. Providing services to the public costs money. Those costs never go down.

The County has spent 17 million on a contract with an agency that is supposed to find them a billion dollars in efficiencies. Yet, they are in effect coming to us to provide those efficiencies. Any efficiencies cannot come out of your pockets. We do however have one suggestion for the County on ways to save money- STOP GIVING AWAY MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO COMPANIES MAKING UNREALISTIC PROMISES!

At the moment it is safe to say that we and the County are pretty far apart. Bargaining, however, can be a pretty fluid situation, and things can change at the drop of a hat.

So, please keep that in mind. I would encourage us all not to be discouraged simply because the current snap shot of our negotiations looks somewhat bleak.

While we are planning and preparing for a possible declaration of impasse, it is too soon to assume that we will not be able to arrive at a deal that makes sense for us as well as for the County. I do believe that people of good faith can always find areas of agreement, and we will continue to work toward that end.

All of these matters will be discussed in greater detail at our membership meetings next week.

The next meeting with the County is next Wednesday, after which I will post another update.

**In Solidarity,
Stephen Switzer, Business Manager**