



Council to consider police, public works salary ordinances



FILE PHOTO

By **LINDA MOSS**

moss@montclairlocal.news

The Township Council is scheduled to vote on salary ordinances for new contracts with the Montclair Police Department and municipal public-works employees in deals that generally give the workers roughly 2 percent pay increases, according to officials.

At its conference meeting last week the local governing body discussed putting ordinances for the three contracts on the agenda for its Nov. 28 meeting, but the township hasn't finalized that agenda yet.

The new four-year contract with Police Benevolent Association Local 53 spans Jan. 1, 2015, through Dec. 31, 2018, according to a copy of the document filed with the state Public Employment Relations Commission.

"It took us the better part of two years to get a deal done, but we ultimately got it done," said David DeFillippo, the PBA's attorney. "It took a lot of good faith on both sides, the PBA as well as the town. There was some compromise, give and take, just as there is in any negotiation by both sides. ... This was an amicable settlement that both sides felt was reasonable."

The township also reached an agreement with Superior Officers Association Local 53A, the union that represents township police sergeants, lieutenants and captains. That contract, also four years, covers Jan. 1, 2016, through Dec. 31, 2019.

And lastly the township has struck a deal with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal

Employees Local 2296, known as AFSCME. That agreement runs from Jan. 1 of this year through Dec. 31, 2019, according to the contract filed with the state. AFSCME mainly represents workers in the township public works and utilities departments.

"It's complex in many ways, but the bottom line is basically a 2 percent cap [on salary increases]," Montclair Mayor Robert Jackson said.

The terms of the township's contract with the PBA were hammered out late last year with a memorandum of agreement that was ratified by the rank and file, according to DeFillippo. Then earlier this year the contract was actually drafted, and it took some time for both sides to agree to its language, he said. He didn't know why the council is only now taking action on the salary ordinance.

"We settled this contract almost a year ago now," DeFillippo said.

Members of all three unions are entitled to retroactive pay based on the new contracts, and DeFillippo said he believed that PBA 53 had gotten its money already.

Joseph Hannon, an attorney with Genova Burns of Newark, the law firm representing the AFSCME local, referred questions on that agreement to the township.

The police contracts are detailed documents that cover not only base salaries but longevity pay, vacations, clothing allowances, and successive one-year "steps," the time increments at which an officer's wages are increased.

PBA Local 53's new contract replaced one that spanned 2012 to Dec. 31, 2014, according to DeFillippo.

It has two salary schedules, one for officers hired before July 1, 2013, and one for those hired after that date. The starting salary for police right out of the academy in both schedules from 2015 through 2018 in the new contract is the same, \$33,317. Officers receive the academy pay rate for 26 weeks. After that for officers hired before July 1, 2013, base salaries - ranging from \$53,713 for the first step to \$83,398 for the fifth step - remain the same over the term of the contract. At the sixth and final step, the salary increases from \$93,907 in 2015 to \$99,655 in 2018.

The pay schedule for new hires, those who came on the job after July 1, 2013, has eight steps until an officer gets to that \$99,655 salary in 2018, according to the contract filed with PERC.

"The top-step salary was increased by 2 percent," DeFillippo said. "The other steps remained the same, but officers continued to move from one step from another as they progressed through the guide."

The 59-page PBA agreement also reflects a "modest" increase in the clothing allowance for officers, to \$1,125 from \$1,050 effective retroactively from Jan. 1 this year, according to DeFillippo.

In the 44-page agreement with the superior officers, a second-year sergeant's pay increases from \$113,476 in 2016 to \$120,412 in 2019; a second-year lieutenant goes from \$130,488 to \$138,474 during that time span;

and a second-year sergeant sees an increase from \$150,059 to \$159,244.

Personnel costs for 107 police — officers and superiors — in this year's \$85.5 million municipal budget are \$17.3 million, including \$11.8 million for base pay and \$925,000 for overtime and other compensation, according to documents posted on the township website.

"Budget-wise we're in a good place," Jackson said.