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No End in Sight for Boston Firefighters' Contract

Negotiations or JLMC actions may go through next spring

It now seems plausible that the collective bargaining contract between the Menino Administration and the firefighters' union, Local 718 (approximately 1,600 members) may not be settled until next spring. The Menino Administration has been in negotiations for a new contract with the firefighters, Local 718 for 32 months, since December 2005. The collective bargaining contract between the City and Local 718 expired over two years ago on June 30, 2006, but its provisions remain in force until superseded by a new contract.

The delay in reaching a timely settlement of this contract points to the union's unrealistic financial demands and to problems stemming from outdated state laws and practices that do not meet the needs of public management in today's fiscal environment.

After 21 unproductive bargaining sessions over 20 months, the City petitioned the state Joint Labor-Management Committee (JLMC) to take jurisdiction of the dispute on August 1, 2007. That did not happen until 6 months later and the process is still in mediation with the possibility of arbitration still ahead.

Mandatory annual drug and alcohol testing has become a key issue in this new contract but there are several other operational measures that need to be addressed in the new agreement. No changes in the language of the firefighters' contract have been made in seven years, but several management problems have emerged that now require contract changes. For more information on this matter, click here [<MORE>](#)

A chronology of the major steps in the firefighter negotiations is provided below to help explain the delay of a settlement:

December, 2005	Negotiations began
August 1, 2007	City petitioned JLMC to take jurisdiction of dispute
February 7, 2008	JLMC took case
February 27, 2008	JLMC held first mediation session led by its staff
April 30, 2008	JLMC could not vote to move to arbitration because firefighter member was not at meeting
May 8, 2008	JLMC voted to move to arbitration but did not set date for 3A hearing to begin the process
May 16, 2008	First mediation session (of 5 so far) held with a private mediator outside of the JLMC
Arbitration process expected to be initiated soon after JLMC publicly sets 3A hearing date.	

Unsettled Police Contract

The firefighters are not the only public safety union without a contract. The Boston Police Superior Officers union (260 Sergeants, Lieutenants & Captains) is currently engaged in mediation with the Administration under the jurisdiction of the JLMC. This is the highest paid city union whose contract expired on June 30, 2006.