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## Impact on Future Spending Is Key for Firefighters' Contract

*Firefighters' response provides an opening but the two parties must agree on an affordable plan*

The Boston City Council should not be so quick to accept the offer by IAFF Local 718 as the panacea for the vote they must take. Each Councilor has the fiduciary responsibility to vote for a contract that is reasonable for the firefighters and protects the taxpayers from the escalating costs of future union agreements that the City cannot support at this time. More expensive collective bargaining agreements, combined with the growth in pension and health insurance spending, will inevitably require a shifting of limited resources away from other basic services.

The City Council's hearing on the arbitration award produced an offer by Local 718 to delay a salary increase of 2.5% by 12 months to June 30, 2011. This offer is not the answer but it has provided an opening for the Menino Administration and Local 718 to meet and discuss different options that hopefully could lead to contract resolution.

The Research Bureau released a [Special Report](#) last week which recommend that the fire arbitration award not be approved by the City Council as currently structured. Moving the final salary increase forward 12 months does nothing to change our recommendation. This delay still opens the possibility for two pay increases in fiscal 2011, a situation that is unsustainable with other unions, especially the four police unions, intent on achieving comparability.

Having already managed through two consecutive years of state aid cuts, the City of Boston is heading into two more years of fiscal uncertainty with even deeper local aid cuts expected in fiscal

2012. How a final salary resolution of the Local 718 contract raises the bar in fiscal 2011 or fiscal 2012 is critical to the City's ability to manage through its third and fourth years of state aid cuts and to limit cuts in other basic services. Postponing payment of a 2.5% wage increase until fiscal 2012 does not provide any financial solution to the City's fiscal dilemma and only compounds the fiscal problems for a difficult fourth year.

Especially now, the City Council must consider the financial challenges facing the City over the next 2-3 years as it acts on the arbitration award that grants the firefighters an average salary increase of 19.2%, however distributed.

### Comparability With Police

Why the wage provisions of the firefighters' arbitration award could have a material impact on future contract spending is evident by the chart below that compares the base salaries of a 10-year firefighter with a patrol officer from FY06 through June 30, 2010. The sense that the firefighters have achieved a greater salary advantage will cause the police unions to expect more in their next contracts.

Position	10-Year Fire Fighter	Police Officer
Salary 2006	\$72,937	\$72,912
January 1, 2010	\$84,784	\$82,914
% Increase 06-1/10	16.2%	13.7%
June 30, 2010	\$87,336	\$82,914
% Increase 06-6/10	19.7%	13.7%