

## **MEMORANDUM**

TO: Board of County Commissioners, Governing Body

FROM: Michael L. North, Assistant County Counselor

RE: Recommendation Regarding Impasse Between Sedgwick County Fire District #1 and IAFF Union Local #2612

DATE: May 9, 2016

### **Recommendation**

Pursuant to K.S.A. 75-4332 (f), Sedgwick County Fire District #1 submits to the Governing Body its recommendations for the dispute between the District and IAFF Union Local #2612 over the terms of its Memorandum of Agreement, effective January 1, 2016.

The District recommends a three year contract.

To settle the impasse, the District offers the following:

Article 14. A. Effective January 1, 2016, the District will reinstitute the pay plan in effect prior to the 2015-2015 agreement. Accordingly, new pay levels for each step classification will be at the compensation rate had 3% step pay increases had occurred in 2014 and 2015, rather than the percentage increases (based on increased valuation in tax base as certified by the County Clerk) identified in Article 16 of the Memorandum of Understanding for years 2014 and 2015. Once reinstituted, the compensation plan shall be frozen at the rates for contract years 2016 through 2018.

Article 14. B. will be amended so that Firefighters and Lieutenants shall receive a 2.0% bonus effective January 1, 2017, and a 2.0% bonus effective January 1, 2018. The wage scale and structure will be published in the County's compensation plan. Firefighters and Lieutenants who receive no immediate increase in compensation by adoption of the pay levels described in paragraph A will receive an additional 1.0% bonus, effective January 1, 2016.

The language in Articles 14, 15 and 16 are attached to this Memorandum. Also attached is the referenced Compensation Plan.

### **Summary of the Argument**

The Fire District's position regarding this recommendation is summarized as follows:

1. The Fire District's financial situation is very tenuous over the next few years, to the point of requiring major structural changes to improve its viability. This is

primarily because the tax base in the Fire District has not increased sufficiently to cover increases in expenses. This is true for a number of reasons: (1) the tax base of the Fire District has been weakened in recent years due to only modest growth in real property values, (2) a decline in personal property, and (3) legislative changes that except specific types of property from tax rolls. Additionally, annexation of property by cities that provide their own fire service has also reduced the tax base. The District cannot afford a pay increase of the dimensions suggested by the Bargaining Unit.

2. The Bargaining Unit's suggestion to use revenue from the Kansas Star Casino as a funding source for the Fire District has legal prohibitions. Additionally, even without legal barriers, the use of gaming revenue already committed to other County uses poses philosophical and practical problems.
3. Under its present compensation structure, the Fire District has had no significant problems recruiting qualified candidates to fill positions or with excessive turnover of personnel. The increases suggested here will not jeopardize this.