

CITY OF OTTAWA
301 West Madison Street
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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: May 5, 2009

RE: AFSCME Local 2819 Agree to Wage Freeze

Mayor Bob Eschbach and Tim Wielgopolan, President of AFSCME Local 2819 announced an agreement to extend the current union contract for an additional year with no pay increase. The agreement followed a letter written by the Mayor, on behalf of the City Council, requesting that all unions, as well as appointed personnel, agree to a one year pay freeze due to current economic conditions. AFSCME represents employees working for the City in public works, clerical, and telecommunicator positions.

According to Wielgopolan, the AFSCME union voted to approve the agreement on Thursday, April 30, 2009. "As working men and women we understand and feel the effects of the economy at this time on families trying to get by. We accept the sacrifices we must make in the short term, dealing with a troubled economy, and look forward to a better future for everyone, and a thriving community," said Wielgopolan.

On Tuesday the City Council will also be placing on file amendments to employment agreements to appointed personnel whereby the City's appointed staff would also not receive pay raises for the May 1, 2009/April 30, 2010 fiscal year. The Mayor expressed his appreciation to the AFSCME members and to the City's appointed staff for agreeing to the contract extensions with a pay freeze.

In both cases, the City agreed that it will not increase the employee's dollar contribution toward health care during the next fiscal year. Those adjustments go into effect on January 1 of each year, and because of the continuing increase in the rising cost of health care, have typically resulted in an increase in the employee contributions over the past many years.

The City's employment contracts with all three of the employee unions, AFSCME, Fire Fighters Local 523 and the Police Benevolent Labor Committee expired April 30. Negotiations are scheduled to begin with both the Fire Fighters Local 523 and the Police Benevolent Labor Committee in the near future. In the interim, the employees of those unions will be governed by the existing contracts.

"The City appreciates the cooperation of the AFSCME membership and the appointed staff. It becomes very difficult to justify salary increases to our taxpayers at a time when many of them are unemployed, underemployed, have seen their retirement investments dwindle or are in other ways facing reduced incomes," said Eschbach.

On the other hand, the City's commitment to our employees is to attempt to get through the next fiscal year without having to lay off any employees. We pledge to make every effort to make that a reality.