

Ventura County Cities Labor Relations

Background

Relations between cities and unions, representing city workers, have great potential for adversarial positions that might bring abuses to policies and procedures of the cities. With this in mind, the subject was investigated by the current Grand Jury, where no Grand Jury has gone before.

We contacted the cities of Camarillo, Fillmore, Moorpark, Ojai, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, San Buenaventura, Santa Paula, Simi Valley, and Thousand Oaks. We interviewed a spokesperson for each city regarding negotiations and applications of agreements.

We interviewed the appropriate personnel of the Service Employee's International Union (Local 998) and the International Union of Operating Engineers (Local 501). These two Unions bargain with eight of the ten cities in Ventura County. Two of the cities, Camarillo and Ojai, do not have unions.

Findings

All those interviewed describe negotiations as being intense at times, but respectfully undertaken. Only occasionally do negotiations result in an impasse. One city is currently filing an impasse.

The lengths of agreements are from one year to four years. The method for evaluating wage levels is by survey of other, comparable cities in Southern California. Only three cities use mid-California cities in their survey. The cities without unions use this method also. These surveys are conducted from every year to every five years. Surveys longer than two years apart have methods for adjustments between surveys when they are needed.

Conclusions

The bargaining process works well for all the cities of Ventura County (unionized or not). The application of the agreements is working well. Where disagreements occur, both the labor union and

the city redefine the intent, reach agreement and proceed accordingly. Reports of this redefinition action occurring for all of the ten cities are less than five times in any one year. Policies applied by cities to their labor forces are cited as reasonable over the past two years by interviewed spokespersons.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury urges the cities and unions to continue the practice of good faith negotiations they currently use.

Responses Required

None.