

APPROVED

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
MUNICIPAL ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW BOARD (MARB)

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date and Time: Thursday, August 13, 2020 10:30 AM – 11:00 AM

Meeting Location: This was a telephonic meeting. Meeting materials may be accessed at the following website:
<https://portal.ct.gov/OPM/Marb/West-Haven-Committee-Meetings-and-Materials>

Call-In Instructions:

Telephone Number: (860) 840-2075

Meeting ID: 510 318 91

Members in Attendance: Secretary McCaw, Christine Shaw (State Treasurer designee), Matthew Brokman, Sal Luciano (joined after adoption of minutes), David Biller, Mark Waxenberg, Robert White

City Officials in Attendance: Mayor Rossi, Frank Cieplinski, Lee Tiernan, Chris Hodgson (labor attorney)

OPM Staff in Attendance: Bill Plummer, Michael Walsh, Julian Freund

I. Call to Order & Opening Remarks

The meeting was called to order at 10:35 AM

II. Approval of Minutes: June 22, 2020

Ms. Shaw made a motion, with a second by Mr. Biller, to approve the June 22 minutes. The motion passed 5-0-1 with Secretary McCaw abstaining.

III. Review, Discussion and Possible Action: Labor Contract

a. Allingtown Firefighters IAFF Local 1198

Secretary McCaw noted that the special meeting of the subcommittee to review the proposed agreement did not take place due to lack of quorum. Although the MARB subcommittees typically review labor contracts prior to MARB action, it is not a requirement and the MARB may act on this item without a recommendation from the subcommittee.

The MARB approved a contract for the West Haven Firefighters in April 2019. The prior contract had expired June 2017. The contract approved in April 2019 had a term of July 2017 through June 2022. The proposed agreement would extend the contract by one year to June 2023 and was ratified by the union on July 15th. City Council approved the contract on July 27th. The MARB has until August 28th to take action on the agreement if it chooses.

Mr. Hodgson provided an explanation of the proposed agreement. The contract would transition the union members to the State Partnership effective July 2021. The contract extension provides for a general wage increase of 2% in the final year and increases the employee premium share from 13%

to 14%. The EMT/Paramedic stipends increase by \$200 in July 2021 and another \$200 in July 2022. The 2% general wage increase follows a 1% general wage increase in the prior year preceded by four years of 0% general wage increases.

Secretary McCaw noted the distinction between comparing the agreement to the assumptions in the City's 5-Year Plan and assessing the overall net cost of the agreement. The total salary impact is approximately \$57,000. The last update on the impact of moving the Firefighters to the State Partnership showed a modest increase in premium cost to the City. Secretary McCaw asked if those projections had changed and how that figured into the proposal. Mr. Tiernan noted that the increase would be minor, and that it would be a move toward consistency in shifting groups to the State Partnership. He added that moving larger groups to the Partnership provides savings.

Mr. Waxenberg noted the combined mill rates of the City and the fire districts, and the long-term liabilities of each. He referred to a synopsis of the City of Hartford's negotiations with their fire union and the restructuring of that contract. The agreement significantly altered salaries and health care. He raised numerous sections of the contract that he believes need to be modified, but are not addressed in the proposal, including clarifications regarding retiree health benefits and accrued leave payouts. If the proposal were a straight trade-off of transition to the State Partnership and an increase in the premium share, he would be in support of the agreement. However, inclusion of the stipends and general wage increase put the agreement out of balance.

Secretary McCaw and several board members noted that the agreement is a missed opportunity to take a more comprehensive approach in negotiations with the union. Given the City's status as a financially distressed municipality, several members indicated that the proposed contract extension did not move the City closer to financial sustainability. The extension of the contract would further delay any opportunity to address other provisions of the contract. While some members could support an agreement that provides for a transition to the Partnership and an increase in premium share within the existing contract term (through 6/30/2022), they did not support extending the contract without a full negotiation of the contract.

Mr. Waxenberg made a motion, with a second by Mr. White, to reject the agreement between the City of West Haven and the West Haven Firefighters. The motion to reject was passed unanimously, 7-0-0.

IV. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:33 AM.