



Published November 29th, 2017

Labor agreement reached between Orinda and city employees

By Nick Marnell

The Orinda City Council approved a new two-year labor agreement Nov. 21 between the city and its represented employees. The agreement runs through June 30, 2019.

Key provisions include an immediate general salary increase of 3 percent, with a second 3 percent increase starting July 1. Each bargaining unit member employed as of Nov. 1 receives a one-time \$250 payment, and the medical benefits remain unchanged for both years.

Total cost to the city for the wage and benefit increases was estimated at \$140,000.

The previous labor contract expired June 30, and with no talks scheduled, city workers represented by Teamsters Union Local 856 staged a two-day strike in July over what the union termed bad faith bargaining by the city. "They've been arbitrarily refusing to negotiate with us over important topics," city maintenance worker Robbie Thompson said at the time. "We want to be treated with respect and the games they play in bargaining are just plain unfair." The Teamsters represent 23 of the 38 city employees.

"The city council is pleased it was able to approve the new contract," said City Manager Steve Salomon. "We were able to give the employees a raise and continue their medical benefits."

Representatives of Teamsters Local 856 did not return repeated calls seeking comment.

The city has struggled financially in 2017, using money from its general fund reserve to pay for the Miner Road sinkhole repairs, with the reimbursement date and amount uncertain. The general fund reserve balance was depleted by more than 50 percent, to under \$3 million.

"Given the financial circumstances, the council feels good about what it was able to do," Salomon said.

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