



Northern Colorado FOP Lodge #3

December 16th, 2017

In May of 2017, Northern Colorado Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #3 entered into contract negotiations with the City of Fort Collins to negotiate the benefits and working conditions the 241 members of the Fort Collins Police Services Collective Bargaining Unit (CBU) would work under during the 2018 and 2019 contract years.

The focus of this negotiations session was the shortcomings in the benefits package most in need of improvement surrounding the ability for our officers to retire at, or near the national average age of 55 years old. There are many reasons why police officers retire earlier than the average age of other industries. A police officer's job comes with inherent risks to the safety of the officer and community other jobs do not confront. Police officers are legally obligated to take any actions necessary to defend the safety of themselves and the public.

Throughout their careers police officers sacrifice their personal safety to defend the rights and safety of complete strangers, often at the cost of their own health and well-being. When a burglary or assault is dispatched to an officer, they are forced to take physical action that often places their personal safety at risk in defense of the defenseless. They do this willingly out of a sense of duty and service because they take significant pride in the calling they have responded to, and they recognize safety, security and justice are the cornerstone of a healthy society. In Fort Collins, our officers have carried out the demands of their job in an exemplary manner earning an approval rating from the community they serve near 95%.

Unfortunately these encounters are many throughout one's law enforcement career, and by the time an officer reaches 55 years of age, they are often unable to provide the same level of service to the community and themselves due to the physical and emotional limitations they have as a result of the impact of this profession has imposed on their physical and emotional state of being.

Many of the law enforcement agencies in our locality provide their officers with a pension plan that allow officers to retire at an age that is compatible with the demand on law enforcement officers. Timnath, Colorado State Patrol and Colorado State University Police Departments provide their officers with a pension plan that allows their public servants to retire at an age which allows officers to safely perform their job and still provide a high standard of service to their communities up to the day they retire. Fort Collins Police officers do not have this option.

Loveland Police Department does not offer a pension plan but recently increased retirement contributions for their police officers because they recognize the necessity of officers to retire at an age that is safe for the community and the officer.

Fort Collins has adopted a methodology in contract negotiations that compares the benefits and working conditions of our officers to twelve (12) benchmark cities. These cities include Denver, Aurora, Lakewood, Thornton, Arvada, Larimer County Sheriff's Department, Westminster, Boulder, Greeley, Loveland, Broomfield and Longmont. When comparing the benefits of these agencies, and those previously mentioned, Fort Collins officers fall significantly behind the curve in

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benefits that allow officers to retire from law enforcement at an age that is safe for the officer and the community they serve.

Throughout the negotiation process FOP leaders pointed these shortcomings out to the City of Fort Collins negotiations team, yet Fort Collins leaders were unwilling to move on the topics in a meaningful way. The FOP felt the benefits package offered by the City of Fort Collins was unacceptable and declared impasse in negotiations after several good faith efforts to meet in the middle failed.

During impasse the FOP went back to their 241 CBU members to discuss last/best offers made by each side. The membership agreed the city was being unreasonable. The FOP then sought out conversations with members of the Fort Collins City Council. Of the seven (7) members of the city council, Councilman Martinez was the only council member willing to hear the concerns of the police officers. Councilman Horak responded to the request to meet stating he saw no reason to discuss these topics. Five (5) members of council, including Councilmembers Overbeck, Summers, Stephens, Cunniff and Mayor Troxell refused to even acknowledge receipt of the invitation to talk.

Instead, the city decided to host two (2) informational meetings with the CBU to outline their benefit offerings. In these sessions city leadership heard a unified message from the CBU, a retirement package that ranks our officers 8th amongst the benchmark cities on retirement, 12th on the subject of retirement medical and right at average on the topic of pay was unacceptable.

The FOP returned to the negotiations table on December 8th with the city in an attempt to obtain a benefits package that was fair to our membership. In this meeting the city agreed to a negligible increase to retirement contributions and retirement medical, but refused to budge on salary and a conflict resolution clause identical to that just approved for our brothers and sisters at Poudre Fire Authority.

Even though the "best and final" offers made by the city did not change the benchmark rankings for our member's benefits plan in any category, we agreed to bring the contract back to the membership for a vote. On December 14, 2017, the contract was voted down by a margin of 3 to 1 with 97% of our members voting.

It is unacceptable in a city that prides itself as being "world-class", and who is the recent recipient of a nationally recognized presidential award, in large part due to our officers, that our city leaders are unwilling to bring the benefits package of those sacrificing everything, to at least, the average of the benchmark cities we compare to!

If you are a resident of Fort Collins, and you think those placing their safety on the line 24 hours per day, 365 days per year in service to your community, are deserving of fair treatment by your city leaders, we encourage you to contact your city manager and city council members to let them know you value your police department and demand fair treatment of them for the service they provide.