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LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT

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The “Teamster Mayor” Curtis Antoniak Steps Up for the Jeannette, PA Police

Brother Antoniak was a lifelong Teamster member of Local 30 who retired from the City of Jeannette to Run for Mayor

New contract for Jeannette police could help city attract job candidates

RENATTA SIGNORINI | Tuesday, March 16, 2021 Tribune Review

According to an article posted online by the Tribune Review, a new four-year contract with Jeannette police officers calls for 2.5% annual pay increases for current employees and additional yearly hikes for new hires, said solicitor Tim Witt.

City officials hope the adjustment for new officers will be an incentive after the department struggled in recent months to get enough candidates to potentially join the force. Witt said new hires will start at \$51,000, which is 70% of the base rate, and then see annual wage increases of 7.5% — the 2.5% for all officers and an additional 5%.

That will bring a new hire's pay in line with current officers within six years, something that wasn't possible under the previous agreement, Witt said. “We wanted to incentivize new officers to be hired by the city,” he said. Council approved the collecting bargaining agreement last week. The Jeannette Police Officers' Benefit Association representative declined to comment. The department has 12 officers.

Police Chief Shannon Binda is again seeking candidates for a civil service test to potentially join the department after getting just a handful of applicants when he advertised the test a few months ago. There will be at least two spots open this year after Binda and another officer retire. He

hopes to see more apply now that the pay scale under the new

pact is more competitive with surrounding departments. “You want to have a large pool of candidates to choose from and that just wasn't the case,” he said. Municipal police forces in the area have struggled recently to get candidates, possibly in part because of the national climate toward policing. Civil service tests can put those who successfully pass a physical and written exam on a list of potential candidates for hire.

The Jeannette department's pay scale under the previous contract prompted one officer to leave the force and two others expressed similar intentions if the situation didn't change, Binda said. The new pact will be beneficial to residents and day-to-day departmental operations, he said. “Officers will stay and get to know our citizens and become part of the community,” he said. “It will no longer be a potential revolving door with officers coming and going.” The new agreement is retroactive to Jan. 1, Witt said. Officers will get one additional personal day and provisions were added to better regulate the use of sick time.

“We made some changes to some quality-of-life issues for our officers” so they have more consistent schedules, he said. An arbitration hearing was averted as both parties continued negotiations and came to an agreement, Witt said. An arbitrator approved the department's previous four-year contract nearly a year after it expired and the city footed the bill for those additional costs.