



City of New Bedford
Office of the Mayor
Contact: Holly Huntoon
(508) 989-4407

Holly.Huntoon@newbedford-ma.gov

CITY OF NEW BEDFORD
Jonathan F. Mitchell, Mayor

Date: Friday, April 28, 2023
For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE

Mayor Mitchell and City Employee Union Reach Agreement

New Bedford, Massachusetts – Mayor Jon Mitchell and the union representing municipal employees, AFSCME Local 851, have successfully negotiated a new collective bargaining agreement. The total estimated cost of the agreement is \$4.2 million over the contract's three-year term. The contract applies to 364 positions across city government.

The union membership ratified the agreement earlier this week, and, as required by law, Mayor Jon Mitchell submitted a funding request with the City Council to cover an estimated \$92,000 in Fiscal Year 2023 costs. Savings in the City's current operating budget will be used to cover approximately \$80,000 in additional Fiscal Year 2023 costs. The Mayor's funding request will be considered at a Special Meeting of the City Council scheduled for Wednesday, May 3, 2023.

"I wish to thank the City's and the Union's negotiating teams and their work to secure an agreement that fairly compensates our hard-working municipal employees while protecting the interests of taxpayers. The agreement will help the City address staffing shortages, especially among our emergency dispatchers, who have had to work long hours to maintain a reliable level of service," said Mayor Mitchell.

Key Contract Terms

Effective April 24, 2023, the contract eliminates "step 1" on the employee step scale and adds a new step at the top of the step scale at 3% more than the step before it; and provides a 1% COLA. These changes combined result in an increase of 4.75% per hour for the average employee.

Effective July 1, 2023, the contract eliminates the new “step 1” and adds a new step at the top of the step scale at 3% more than the step before it; and provides a 2% COLA. These changes combined result in an increase of 5.78% per hour for the average employee.

Effective July 1, 2024, the contract leaves the new step structure in place and provides a 2% COLA. These changes combined result in an increase of 5.47% per hour for the average employee.

Dispatcher-Specific Terms

The City committed to significant compensation increases to address a staffing shortage in the 911 Dispatch Center, and to incentivize the retention of existing dispatch staff. Effective April 24, 2023, in addition to the COLA and step changes listed above, dispatchers are moved from the current “Grade G” pay range (\$19.21-26.82) to “Grade K” pay range (\$22.06-30.78) on the compensation schedule.

This change immediately shifts the dispatcher pay range upwards by nearly 15%, which is provided in addition to the percentage increases in hourly pay rates described earlier. Effective July 1, 2023, the Grade K pay range becomes \$23.17-32.34, and effective July 1, 2024, the Grade K range becomes \$23.63-32.99.

Other Contract Terms

The City is committed to conducting a reclassification exercise for AFSCME positions that will be completed by the end of the contract. Eligible employees will also qualify for a Commercial Drivers License stipend, reimbursement annually for work boots, and an increased longevity incentive.