

City Council approves \$1.2M salary increases in new union contract

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WOONSOCKET – City employees represented in Local 670 will see salary increases adding to \$1.2 million over the next three years under a new contract ratified by the City Council Monday night.

The new contract, which is retroactive to July of 2023, stipulates a 4% wage increase for fiscal year 2023, and then 3% increases for the fol-

lowing two fiscal years. Select positions were also reclassified into higher pay categories under the new contract, so those employees will receive additional raises in fiscal year 2024.

“It’s been a long time coming and I think it’s a fair contract to both sides, and it also helps out some of our lower paid employees in particular,” said John Burns, a representative of Local 670.

See UNION, page A3

Second HIV prevention bill

Union

Continued from page A1

The reclassification affects 14 positions, including several library staff members, heavy equipment operators in the highway department and parks department and clerks in the police department.

Public Works Director Steve D'Agostino also said he supports the new con-

tract, as many of the impacted employees report to him.

"I'm extremely proud of them," he said. "They've come a long way in the last 10 years and they work hard daily, and in my opinion, they've been underpaid for many years. They deserve a fair pay and I'm glad to see that they're finally going to get a fair pay."

He also thanked the taxpayers who "foot the bill"

for the "generous" pay and benefits afforded to city employees.

Council President John Ward pointed out that the council will need to take a close look at the budget projections for next fiscal year and potentially amend the budget ordinances approved in June for the current fiscal year, which did not account for any wage increases.

The resolution ratifying

the contract was on the City Council's agenda at its last regular meeting two weeks ago, but the contract that was published for public comment did not include the fiscal impact statement prepared by the city Finance Department, so the resolution was tabled.

Two other union contracts are also up for renegotiation this year, AFSCME AFL-CIO Local 3851, which represents

the professional and technical city employees, and NEPBA Local 808, which represents the police. The council approved another resolution on Monday designating Mayor Christopher Beauchamp and City Solicitor Michael Lepizera to begin negotiating with both unions.

Sitting in his first meeting since his return to the council, Council member Daniel Gendron introduced

an amendment, which was accepted, that requires prior review and approval of the City Council in order to ratify any tentative agreement the two parties reach. His amendment also requires council approval for any paid third-party that may need to be consulted by Beauchamp and Lepizera.

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