



Massachusetts Municipal Association

MMA BEST PRACTICES SERIES

Recommendations for Effective Local Government Administration and Management from MMA Policy Committees

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MMA Policy Committee on Personnel and Labor Relations

Best Practice Recommendation: Adequate Preparation for Collective Bargaining Cases Referred to the Joint Labor-Management Committee

BEST PRACTICE: Engage in collective bargaining using a comprehensive approach that recognizes the possibility that police and fire negotiations may be referred to the Joint Labor-Management Committee (JLMC). This includes setting a pattern with all bargaining units, costing out the total package, establishing comparable communities, and having an agreed-upon financial policy.

The Joint Labor-Management Committee (JLMC) is designed to mediate collective bargaining disputes and impasses between municipalities and their police and fire unions. When the JLMC takes jurisdiction over a matter, the parties are assigned a labor representative, management representative, and a neutral mediator.

Preparation is the key to a successful outcome at the JLMC. It is essential to set a uniform pattern with other municipal and school bargaining units to establish common expectations, and well-documented intra-community comparables for negotiations with your police and fire unions, and it is important to have this framework in place *before* the JLMC becomes a possibility.

It is also important to cost out the total package on the table. Seemingly non-monetary items, such as additional vacation days or shift swapping, will cost cities and towns money in the way of overtime. It is important to understand the cost of every aspect of the proposals submitted by municipalities and labor.

As part of the preparation, it is important for municipalities to identify a reasonable list of comparable communities. Having a set of comparable communities gives municipalities vital information and adds credibility when cases are heard before the JLMC. If labor seeks to promote a different set of comparable communities, it is important to know this and to analyze the impact this would have. Ideally, municipalities should work early on with labor to agree on a common list of comparable cities or towns.

The JLMC uses peer mediators as part of the negotiation process. Municipal officials should work with their JLMC management peers as they assist them throughout the JLMC process.

When working with labor unions, it is critical for management to know and work with the labor unit representatives on the other side of the table who are interested in constructive negotiations. These individuals are long-time municipal

employees, and it benefits all parties when management can work collaboratively with reasonable people within the labor union to reach agreement.

Finally, it is vitally important for municipalities to adopt formal reserve and financial policies that identify the specific uses of reserve funds, stabilization accounts, capital funds and other one-time or recurring revenue sources. These policies will ensure that the financial goals of the community are clearly documented, so monies that have been set aside to deal with unforeseen emergencies, economic downturns, capital projects, OPEB liabilities, and other uses can be protected during the negotiation process.

These best practices will allow municipal officials to effectively negotiate on behalf of local citizens and taxpayers, and provide greater chance of success before the Joint Labor-Management Committee.