

February 6, 2006

To the Honorable
The Common Council
City of Milwaukee

Dear Common Council Members:

- Summary -

This report recommends recruitment at any step in the salary grade for the position of Labor Negotiator in the Department of Employee Relations.

Present	Request
Title: Labor Negotiator Salary: SG 014 (\$80,405 - \$112,571)	Title: Labor Negotiator Salary: SG 014 (\$80,405 - \$112,571)
Recommendation: Title: Labor Negotiator Salary: SG 014 (\$80,405 - \$112,571) Footnote: Recruitment may be at any step in the salary grade, subject to approval by the Department of Employee Relations and the Chair of the Committee on Finance and Personnel.	
Rationale: This position plays a significant role in negotiating contract provisions that have the impact of creating and maintaining a sustainable fiscal future for the City of Milwaukee. The recent recruitment and selection process conducted by the Department of Employee Relations to fill this important position yielded a limited number of qualified candidates. In order to attract candidates for this important position that possess the right labor relations background and experience, we are requesting the ability to recruit candidates for this position at any step in the salary grade.	

Action Required (Effective Pay Period 5, 2006 (February 26, 2006):

In the Salary Ordinance, under Salary Grade 014, add the footnote designation “1” following the title “Labor Negotiator” and add the following footnote: “1/ Recruitment may be at any step in the salary grade, subject to approval by the Department of Employee Relations and the Chair of the Committee on Finance and Personnel.”

Background

In 1989, a new Department of Employee Relations was created from the previous Personnel Department, Employee Benefits Department, Safety Department, and Labor Relations Division of the City Clerks Office. Within this reorganized department, a division of Labor Relations was created under the direction and control of the Labor Negotiator.

The Labor Negotiator, while serving as a member of the Mayor's Cabinet under Wisconsin Statutes 62.51, is also directed in the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances Chapter 340-11 to perform his or her duties in close liaison with both the Common Council and the Finance and Personnel Committee.

The Department of Employee Relations has recently conducted a nationwide recruitment for this position and has experienced difficulty in attracting highly qualified candidates for the position.

Duties and Responsibilities

The position of Labor Negotiator is the City of Milwaukee's chief spokesperson and agent in labor relations matters. The position develops and administers a comprehensive labor relations program for the City under the general direction and guidance of the Mayor, the Labor Policy Committee of the Common Council, and the Director of Employee Relations. Major responsibility areas include:

- Contract Negotiations: Responsible for the negotiation of labor contracts with 19 bargaining units. Responsible for developing an operating strategy to effectively manage the City's interest in the collective bargaining process.
- Contract Administration, Interpretation and Training: Responsible for management's interpretation of all negotiated contract matters
- Grievance Administration: Responsible for administering the grievance procedure at all steps to ensure compliance with negotiated contract language and to encourage settlement at the lowest possible step.
- Arbitration: In conjunction with the City Attorney's Office, responsible for preparing and presenting the City's case at interest and grievance arbitration proceedings. Responsible for analyzing and making decisions regarding the handling of grievance arbitration requests.
- Responsible for overall direction and operations of the labor relations division including planning, staff supervision and evaluation, hiring, diversity, staff training and development, and budgeting.
- Also responsible for analyzing and developing recommendations in the areas of pension, health insurance, and other important issues; Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission matters such as unit determinations and clarifications and prohibited practice hearings; consulting with City departments and Employee Relations staff on matters relating to contract administration and negotiations; and advising with regard to legislative and other actions that may affect employee relations.

The position requires a Bachelor's degree in labor/industrial relations, public administration, business administration, psychology or related field and five years significant experience in labor relations activities including collective bargaining, negotiations, and grievance administration.

Analysis

The City's Labor Negotiator position plays a critical role working with the Budget and Management Division in addressing the structural budget imbalances faced by the City of Milwaukee. Working with the administration and the Common Council this position is responsible for identifying strategies and initiatives to be negotiated with 19 bargaining units. In this capacity this position plays a significant role in negotiating contract provisions that have the impact of creating or maintaining a sustainable fiscal future for the City of Milwaukee.

As a public official and member of the Mayor's cabinet this position works to secure the cooperation and collaboration of other public and elected officials in negotiating in good faith with all labor unions while maintaining a sensible uniformity in wages, hours of work, and other conditions of employment across City government.

The recent recruitment and selection process conducted by the Department of Employee Relations to fill this important position yielded a limited number of qualified candidates. Many of the candidates possessed a strong human resources background but inadequate experience in collective bargaining in a multi-union environment. In addition to requiring a formal degree in labor/industrial relations or related field, the City also required at least five years of significant labor relations and grievance administration experience, including interest arbitration.

A review of our files indicates that in order to recruit Labor Negotiators in the past, flexibility in hiring rate has been sought and obtained. In order to attract candidates for this important position that possess the right background and experience, we are requesting the ability to recruit candidates for this position at any step in the salary grade.

Recommendation

We therefore recommend that the recruitment rate for Labor Negotiator (Salary Grade 014, \$80,405-\$112,571) be allowed at any step in the salary grade, subject to approval of the Department of Employee Relations and the Chair of the Committee on Finance and Personnel.

Sincerely,

Maria Monteagudo
Employee Relations Director

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