

# **FIRE FIGHTERS OF BOCA RATON**

*Local 1560 Inc.*

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Dear Boca Raton Residents:

Over the past six months or so, the city's public safety professionals have come under increased scrutiny. A discussion that started with a group claiming to be citizens for fiscal responsibility initially spoke out about concerns over retirements system costs, but they have gone so far as to suggest that some fire stations should be closed at night, a move that would leave those in need of emergency services in peril. These suggestions lack foresight and are irresponsible.

When it comes to our Retirement System, the residents should know that our members contribute 10.2% of their salary. The retirement system is in good shape. It helps to attract and retain the highest quality personnel. Is it as funded as we would like? No. That is why we've offered to enter into negotiations with the city to work toward a collaborative resolution that reigns in the city's cost while giving due consideration to current and future members.

When it comes to the City financial status, it has been well established that the City in excellent shape. The City holds a Triple A bond rating, is a full service City on one of the lowest millage rates in the State of Florida, and ensures that each department operates in an effective, yet efficient manner. In fact, the City's public safety umbrella, which includes police officers, firefighters, and paramedics, and the City's retirement costs for those employees, costs approximately fifteen percent of the city's overall budget.

On Thursday, February 21, City Leaders met outside of the sunshine in an Executive Session to make a decision on whether or not to continue to work in a cooperative spirit with their public safety professionals. A decision that had the potential of saving the City \$15 Million dollars over three years or in essence a potential \$150 Million over the next thirty years. Unfortunately, when the meeting was over the City chose to delay the process and kick the can down the road.

This would be the third time our union has returned to the table in good faith in the middle of a contract. According to the city manager, our previous concessions so far have save the City in excess of \$3 million dollars. Here we are willing to try once again, and the City refuses constructive dialogue. But we cannot stand by and allow misinformation to go unchallenged. It appears as if the majority of our elected officials have chosen to use this issue for political gain, pushing the issue closer to the March 2014 election, rather than working together in a cooperative spirit.

Respectfully,

John R. Luca, President