Local 807 and L.E.L.S. Local #363

Greetings councilors, we appreciate the meetings we’ve had with you thus far. At some of our meetings, we were asked about specifically what we were looking for or wanted. We’ve advised you all that we can’t and aren’t negotiating with you for wages. What we are asking you is that you provide the resources necessary for our police department to have an adequate budget to address the multitude of things that our profession, and this community are encountering. We are going to provide you with a State Statute requirement with relation to pay equity.

One of the hallmarks of that statute as you will read is that compensation for positions bear reasonable relationship to one another and are comparable. We believe we have shown you that this currently isn’t the case for our city, and it’s causing significant recruiting and retention issues. This isn’t the time as we’ve stated before, to have problems recruiting and retaining the best officers. We are asking that you allocate the resources necessary for the city to comply with the statute. We can’t give you a number. We’ve shared with you wage comparisons as well as the Office of Legislative Auditor report to inform your discussions.

We have also provided you the data that shows the significant disparity in training budgets between the Duluth Police Department and other comparable cities. We do not have a sufficient budget to maintain current training standards let alone any new one’s the community requires from us. We also believe that the pay equity statute could be used in the same manor for training budgets.

We have had further conversations with Chief Tusken who remains in support of this effort. Chief Tusken also agrees that our department budget is inadequate and we continue to be over budget each year because of the lack of an appropriate budget. The city is not providing the Police department the adequate budget to train, address rising crime, specifically violent crime, recruitment and retention, as well as needed expansion. Chief Tusken stated that he would welcome any conversations from you all in relation to this matter.

We believe we have provided you with the necessary information to show the despair we are in, and the dire need to act now to increase the Department budget. We believe at a minimum we should be at or above the average budget for comparable cities to ours. We trust that you will do all you can in this area to reallocate the necessary funding to keep us and our community safe. This should be a top priority for the city and we know you are making it so.

We understand that these are difficult decisions, and don’t take lightly the work that you and we are trying to accomplish together. We fully believe that the future of your police department will likely be decided this year. We appreciate you all sitting down with us, and look forward to further conversations in the future.

Duluth Police Local #807 L.E.L.S. Local #363