

Naperville nears agreement on police contracts

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Naperville police officers could receive pay increases totaling 12 percent over the next three years if their union ratifies a contract next week.

Union and city officials say the two sides have reached a tentative agreement on a three-year deal that will be voted on by the nearly 150-member police officers union. If approved by the union, the city council could ratify the pact at its Jan. 16 meeting.

The officers have been working without a contract since their old one expired at the end of April 2006.

Officials close to the negotiations said the city offered officers raises that average about 4 percent for each year.

The officers also will get to keep their 12-hour shifts, which the city had threatened to eliminate as negotiations wore on.

The union filed an unfair labor practice complaint against the city on Nov. 13 with the Illinois Labor Relations Board. The city had notified the union that officers were expected to return to eight-hour shift rotations in February.

John Brosnan, executive director of the state board, said his office is still investigating the complaint, but expects it to be withdrawn once the contract is ratified.

"All of them disappear when they agree on a contract," he said.

Officer Joe Matchett, president of the department's union, said officers have grown accustomed to the 12-hour shifts and want to keep them.

"The officers have been working them for several years," he said. "They have basically formed their lives around the hours at work. Plus, it means less days a year they have to come into work and that equates to less trips, less gas, less wear and tear on their cars and more time with their family."

But that isn't exactly why the council agreed to let the officers work 12-hour shifts three years ago. The key selling point then was that more officers would be on duty during busier times of the day and the department would require less overtime.

The decrease in overtime hasn't materialized.

Since 2003, the city has seen steady increases in police overtime expenditures every year. The year the 12-hour shifts went into effect, the city saw a 12 percent increase in overtime pay and it was followed the next year by a 6 percent spike.

Matchett said overtime has risen because officers have put more people behind bars.

"The majority of overtime equates to court time, which is going up due to arrests going up," he said. "When arrests go up, court time goes up."

The city budgeted \$2.6 million for police overtime for the fiscal year that ends April 30. Unlike other union contracts the city handles, there is no overtime requirement in the officers' contract, Matchett said.

Assistant City Manager Bob Marshall said the 12-hour shifts were reintroduced into the contract negotiations by Chief David Dial and the council concurred.

Starting salary for a rookie police officer in Naperville is \$50,138, according to the city's human resources department. It would take the addition of 53 officers to match the department's overtime costs.