



EDWARD POLLARD  
HOUSTON CITY COUNCIL MEMBER, DISTRICT J

TIFFANY D. THOMAS  
HOUSTON CITY COUNCIL MEMBER, DISTRICT F

March 18, 2024

Mayor John Whitmire  
901 Bagby Street  
Houston, Texas 77002

Via: Email

RE: Proposed Agreement with Houston Professional Fire Fighters Association

Dear Mayor Whitmire,

This past Friday, March 14, 2024, we received a press release from your office announcing that an agreement was reached between you and the Houston Professional Fire Fighters Association. The statement highlighted a \$650 million settlement for back pay dating 2017 to present. The statement also emphasized that the proposed back pay, added with a new five-year agreement, would ultimately result in an increase of firefighter pay by 34%.

We are in agreement that our firefighters must be paid a competitive salary, however, due to minimal engagement from your office on any specifics, and non-response from you to previous emails on the subject, we have questions on whether the proposed deal is in the city's best financial interest, or will it ultimately cause dire fiscal challenges that will impact services city wide for years to come. As a matter of transparency, we would like answers to the following questions so that we may have the necessary insight and clarity to make informed decisions going forward.

1. After the 18% pay raise (6% consecutively for the previous three years), where does the firefighters salary currently compare to other major cities in Texas?
2. After the voters initially passed Proposition B, before it was later struck down as unconstitutional, the city paid fire fighters \$17M. Was this allocation factored into the negotiation? If so, how?
3. Under state law, Houston is the only city in Texas that overtime for firefighters starts at 46.7 hours opposed to 53 hours for all other municipalities. As such, Houston tax payers pay millions in overtime wages before the standard threshold for other cities is met. How was this factored into negotiations?



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4. We have been informed that you proposed a judgment bond as a tool to secure the \$650 million dollars for back pay. Over what length of time will the bond be for? At what interest do you anticipate taxpayers paying on the bond?
5. Will this bond also include payments for any pension obligations? Are you open to putting the bond as a measure on the upcoming November election for the voters to have a voice in the decision?
6. Is the administration considering asking the voters to raise the revenue cap so that our cap is consistent with the state imposed cap?
7. What is the justification for touting such a sizeable increase to firefighter pay while at the same time asking every other city department to find reductions by 5% across the board?
8. With both the Houston Police Officers Union contract and the Municipal Employees contract expiring soon, how will the proposed agreement with the firefighters impact the city's ability to have funding to satisfy their needs?
9. What role did the Fire Chief have in the formal negotiations?
10. Is it accurate to state the proposed agreement must be signed off by the presiding judge, approved by the Office of the Attorney General, and by a vote of city council?

As you know, by city charter, city council has no administrative authority and cannot participate in negotiations with employee groups. We as council members rely on direct communication from the administration pertaining to specifics of any agreement. As of this date there have been no formal briefings that include your office, the city attorney, the finance director, and the fire chief to have a comprehensive understanding of how these figures were established.

We look forward to hearing back from you on these questions, and may they serve as a starting point of dialogue to ensure the fiscal integrity of the city remains strong and not compromised.

Sincerely,

Edward Pollard, Esq.

Tiffany D. Thomas