
ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE
NEWS RELEASE



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Kent County Commissioners Approve Agreements with Three Employee Labor Unions; Fourth Agreement on the Horizon

GRAND RAPIDS – The Kent County Board of Commissioners approved three labor agreements this morning, weeks before the current agreements expire. Historically, these negotiations have continued beyond the expiration date. One of the contracts covers about 435 County employees: the United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 2600 (General Unit). A fourth agreement has been approved by employees and will be considered by the Board on December 17, 2015.

The County and the UAW reached tentative agreement in late October and members voted to ratify the contract. The agreement provides for 2 percent raises annually for members in 2016, 2017, and 2018. The contract includes a dual-tier wage structure for employees hired on or after July 1, 2016. In some cases, new hires would be receiving lower pay, and a different structure for vacation and paid personal leave. This wage structure is on par with packages offered by market competitors for talent while also taking into account the County's long-term ability to fund the program.

"We applaud our employees for voting to approve this deal that helps us control our labor costs, making us more sustainable in the long run," said Daryl Delabbio, County Administrator/Controller. "We have seen other government entities - right here in Michigan - fail to maintain this balance, at a high cost to all stakeholders. This agreement ensures us that Kent County will not follow in their footsteps." About 25 percent of union contracts in the U.S. use a two-tier wage system.

The County took steps in this agreement to avoid adverse impact on its existing employees. "This contract rewards senior employees for years of hard work," said Dan Koorndyk, Chair of the Kent County Board of Commissioners. "There are no workforce reductions, and employees will continue to see increases in pay." The UAW contract is in effect from January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2018.

Two other union contracts were approved this morning: Teamsters State, County and Municipal Workers – Public Health Nurses (55 employees) three year contract, and Kent County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Association (33 employees) two year contract. Both also call for two percent wage increases annually. Also new for the 2016 contracts: the requirement for employees to pay union dues will be deleted. This is to put the contracts in line with Public Act 349 of 2012. (The previous contracts were approved before Public Act 349 was signed by Michigan's Governor.) The contract with the Police Officers Labor Council – Court Reporters (4 employees) will go before the Board on December 17.

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