



Memorandum

TO: Rules Committee

FROM: Councilmember
Pierluigi Oliverio

SUBJECT: Making Union Negotiations Public

DATE: March 8, 2012

Approved

Date

3-8-12

RECOMMENDATION

Direct the administration:

- 1) To meet and confer with the unions to allow union negotiations to be held as public meetings.
- 2) To bring back the outcomes of the meet and confer meetings to the City Council meeting on August 7, 2012 for the council action to include placing open union negotiations on the November 2012 ballot measure.

BACKGROUND

During my tenure on the City Council, I have viewed the labor negotiation process where city staff and labor representatives meet behind closed doors as simply "maddening." Due to the closed door nature of the meetings, it is clear that not enough information is shared with the public, employees, retirees and councilmembers. Although the City does a good job by posting documents on its website regarding proposals and correspondence from both sides, the old adage, "Actions speak louder than words" applies here. I, and I believe, many others, would rather see the interaction of union officials and city staff in real time. Thus, I ask you, my fellow councilmembers, to support my recommendation to have the city and unions talk about this issue with the hope that they will agree to move forward with allowing these meetings to be public.

The current process contributes to misinformation which then results in ill will and hurt feelings all around. Why continue with the same process that drives people nuts? Public negotiations would open up the process so that we could avoid posturing, brinkmanship and emotional pain. This would help restore trust for those who have become disillusioned.

Last year, the City Attorney union (ALP) allowed for councilmembers and public the opportunity to attend their negotiations. As a result, I attended nearly every public negotiation meeting involving this union. After listening to both sides, I could not disagree with many of

points raised by the union. Attending these meetings allowed me to receive unfiltered information. I believe open negotiations would also do much to help the low public approval rating of unions by allowing others to see what I saw by attending the attorney union negotiations.

I have high respect for our labor relations team that operates under Alex Gurza, but I still desire a more open process to actually end labor conflict(s). This would not affect the mediation process which is a confidential proceeding however mediation is just a fraction of the entire labor negotiation process. The public has already spoken once by voting overwhelmingly for arbitration to be held as public meetings in Nov 2010. This simply would just be an extension of that desire for a visible process.

