

We are pleased to be here to open negotiations on behalf of the Laborers' International Union of North America, Local 773 ("LIUNA Local 773") and the City of Columbia, Missouri employees that our Union represents. We extend our appreciation to the City Council for its willingness to meet and confer and bargain in good faith regarding the employees' wages, hours, and working conditions.

We realize municipalities have faced challenging economic conditions in recent years, and we expect that may lead to difficult negotiations. Nonetheless, LIUNA Local 773 is committed to making every effort to reach an agreement that is good for our members and good for the citizens of Columbia, Missouri.

The goals of LIUNA Local 773 in this year's round of bargaining can be stated simply. We seek a negotiated agreement that is both protective and constructive. It should protect the employees who have dedicated their lives to the service of this community while creating practical solutions to the problems facing the City so that the City and all its employees can continue to provide the services that residents have come to expect.

More specifically, our main priority is to negotiate and memorialize the Chapter 19 personnel policies, procedures, rules, and regulations into a collective bargaining agreement that the employees can be proud of and depend on as the practices of their workplace. We understand there is much work to be done as this is the first time we have joined together to meet this goal in over 10 years. This agreement is an opportunity to reach a milestone in the relationship between the City of Columbia, Missouri and LIUNA Local 773 because it will guide the direction of our future. In addition, it will assist the City with its strategic priority of providing jobs that support families, strengthening and connecting the community, ensuring public safety, and providing high-level service from engaged employees.

Of course, these goals are contingent on the joint involvement of the parties and their demonstrated good faith. To be sure, if the City makes reasonable proposals and counterproposals at the bargaining table, we will certainly recommend ratification to our members. Likewise, we expect the same attitude from the City- that reasonable proposals and counterproposals from the Union will be met with acceptance. If both parties adopt this approach to bargaining, I am optimistic that we will be able to reach a mutually acceptable and beneficial agreement.