

# Facts & DETAILS

## Sedgwick County Fire District 1 & Bargaining Unit Negotiations

### What is the history of the Fire District?

Sedgwick County Fire District 1 (District) can be traced back to 1947 when volunteers use pumper and other makeshift equipment to put out bridge fires. Citizens learned of this practice and began calling the county yards to report fires. In 1954, Sedgwick County authorized a full-time paid county fire department—the first of its kind in Kansas. Since its inception, the District has grown from one station to nine, operating 24 hours per day and strategically located throughout Sedgwick County. The District includes a response area of 631 square miles and approximately 85,000 residents. The District is governed by the Sedgwick County Commission.

### What are the fire fighters' responsibilities?

A fire fighter's primary responsibility is to rescue individuals from burning or collapsing structures and provide medical first response. Fire fighters also respond to Hazmat spills and confined space rescue operations. The District's Prevention Division is responsible for fire investigations, inspections, plan reviews and public education. During 2014, SCFD responded to 9,176 fire, rescue and medical calls.

### What is recognition of Local 2612 International Association of Fire Fighters (Bargaining Unit)?

The Fire District recognizes the Bargaining Unit as the sole and exclusive bargaining agent, as defined by the Kansas Public Employees Relations Act, for the unit of employees determined by the Kansas Public Employee Relations Board in Case No. 75-UD-1979 by its order of February 25, 1980. This agreement covers all fire fighters and lieutenants. Excluded: Chief, deputy chiefs, division chiefs, fire fighter mechanics, captains, and all other employees not specifically included. There are 93 employees in the bargaining unit; 44 employees are exempt, 6 positions are frozen and there is one part-time position. The Bargaining Unit and the District operate under a negotiated Memorandum of Agreement.

### How does the negotiation process work?

During the first quarter of the negotiating year, the Bargaining Unit and the District notify each other of the names of its respective negotiating committee members. Then the Bargaining Unit and District mutually agree to meeting dates.

### What has been the negotiation timeline?

#### 2015

**April 21** – First meeting where items to be discussed by each side were presented. A list of approximately 20 items were developed and discussed during the next 10 meetings over the summer with the last one on September 30. Most of the items were resolved with exception of Article 16: Compensation Structure and Within Range Salary Increases (steps).

**September 30** – The District presented final offer to the Bargaining Unit concerning Article 16.

**October 27** – the Bargaining Unit's lawyer sends request to Public Employee Relations Board (PERB) to appoint a mediator as we are at impasse; this is the next phase after the negotiating parties cannot agree. Impasse declared.

**October 27** – PERB assigns mediator. If impasse persists 7 days after mediator is appointed, PERB will request appointment of fact finding board of not more than three members. Parties shall bear the cost of such fact finding board.

**November 5** – Mediator offers dates for mediation: Nov 23, Dec 8, Dec 11 and Dec 22. All of these dates are well outside the seven days.

**November 5** – the Bargaining Unit's lawyer replies to mediator "best date is Dec 8."

**November 5** – Mediator asks if Dec 8 is acceptable to the District.

**November 6** – The District replies to mediator Dec 8 will work.

**November 6** – Mediator will confirm Dec 8 afternoon (with the Bargaining Unit).

**November 11** – Bargaining Unit's lawyer sends apology to mediator that he has made a mistake and incorrectly advised that clients were available for mediation on Dec 8; he requests other dates for consideration.

**November 11** – Mediator offers Dec 14.

**November 12** – District replies to mediator and Bargaining Unit lawyer that 1-4PM will work and reserves a room for meeting.

**November 18** – Bargaining Unit lawyer sends letter to mediator and PERB requesting an appointment of a fact finder because parties are still at impasse seven days after mediator is appointed even though a mediator meeting never occurred. Impasse confirmed.

**November 19** – PERB sends five resumes to use for selection of fact finder. Both parties must meet and select one fact finder.

**December 14** – District and Bargaining Unit select a Fact Finder.

**December 17** – Jan. 26/27 selected for Fact Finder Hearing in Wichita.

#### 2016

**January 26/27** – Fact Finder hearings held in Wichita

**March 25** – Fact Finder report released to the Bargaining Unit and District

**April 25** – Negotiation remains at an impasse, public hearing set for May 11



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**Next steps:** The Board or the Board's appointing committee conducts a hearing and receives reports from both representatives. Finally the Governing Board, if still no agreement, acts "in the public interest" to impose a unilateral contract.

### How much has the Fire District assessed valuation increased in recent years?

Year:	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
% assessed valuation growth:	2.0%	0.8%	1.2%	1.8%	0.9%

### Historically, what have fire fighter pay/step increases been?

Year:	2012	2013	2014	2015
Step increases:	3.0%	3.0%	1.2%	1.2%
4 year avg:	2.1%			

### How does fire fighter pay/step increases compare to other (non-Union) county employees in past years?

Although other County department employees do not receive step increases, they are eligible for a pay-for performance pool/increase. The following are pay pools for those employees:

Year:	2012	2013	2014*	2015
Pay pool:	0%	2.5%	3.76%	2.5%
4 year avg:	2.2%			

\*In 2014 county employees received 2.5 percent pay pool and later received an additional 1.26 percent market adjustment as part of the Evergreen compensation study.

### What could happen to the Fire District budget if the Bargaining Unit pay request is implemented?

Operating income deficit would continue. This in turn would decrease the ending fund balance to a point where portions of programs may be shut down in 2019 and 2020, as there are insufficient funds to continue operations.

### What other efforts have been implemented in recent years to adjust to the financial challenges of the Fire District?

The low revenue growth has challenged the Fire District budget. To lessen the impact on further depletion of the ending fund balance the Fire District held eight positions unfunded. In an effort to help with the unfunded positions, the District applied for a Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response (SAFER) Federal Grant. This grant would have provided funding directly to the Fire District to help them increase or maintain the number of trained "front line" fire fighters. Unfortunately, the District was not selected to receive the grant. In addition, the Bargaining Unit and the District negotiated in the previous labor contract (2014/2015) that step increases would be held to the percentage of the assessed valuation growth:

2014 steps = 1.2% and 2015 steps = 1.2%.

