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PRESS RELEASE

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DARE: October 22, 2008

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DECISION ANNOUNCED IN FIRE ARBITRATION

ROCKFORD – October 22, 2008 – City officials today announced that Arbitrator Herbert Berman has returned his decision on the Interest Arbitration case pending between the City of Rockford and the International Association of Firefighters, AFL-CIO Local 413 (IAFF).

The request to arbitrate, made by the IAFF in August of 2006, looked for resolution on 6 (six) issues: Contract Duration, Wages, Health Insurance, Death Benefit, Chiropractic Limit, and Health and Safety Committee. The decision on contract duration was announced by Berman in August of 2007 and established that the contract would cover 3 (three) years, 2006, 2007 and 2008.

On the remaining issues, Arbitrator Berman has decided that the City would prevail on wages, allowing firefighters a base wage increase of 3.5% for 2006, 3.5% for 2007, and 4% for 2008. The IAFF union had proposed increases totaling 4% in 2006, 4.5% in 2007 and 5% in 2008. The Arbitrator also sided with the City on non-retroactive life insurance benefit for firefighters, and limited chiropractic treatment to \$1,500 per year.

The arbitrator's decision cited a desire to blend the parties' proposals on Health Insurance, but due to the constraints of the arbitration process which require the selection of a single proposal, selected the Union's proposal for health insurance.

Much like the City's 2007 plan for non-union and AFSCME Employees, firefighters will pay less in payroll deductions for single and single plus-one coverage, but more for family coverage as of the date of the arbitration decision. Deductibles will increase for all participants. The arbitrator also adjusted the parties Safety Committee proposals.

The arbitration process, which originally began in the late fall of 2006, has been noted to be the longest arbitration decision in the city's history. The uncertainty that has come during the long-awaited decision has caused concern for city leaders, union members, and Rockford citizens. "We are pleased to finally get a decision that will allow both the city and the union to move forward." stated Mayor Larry Morrissey.

The IAFF and the City of Rockford recently began the negotiation process for their next contract, which would commence in 2009. "We now have the foundation we need to sit down at the table and negotiate in good faith with our Fire union on our next contract," Morrissey pointed out.

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